Mastering Adobe Photoshop Elements 2021

Third Edition

Boost your image-editing skills using the latest tools and techniques in Adobe Photoshop Elements

Robin Nichols

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Robin Nichols

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BIRMINGHAM—MUMBAI

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To my wonderful wife, Natalie, whose love of life, great humor,
and boundless talent helped sustain me through the seemingly endless
hours spent putting this latest book together…

-Robin Nichols, Sydney, 2021

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Contributors

About the author

Born in the UK, **Robin Nichols** has always had a great love for recording the world with a camera. After finishing school, he studied fine art, before moving to Nottingham Trent University where he gained a degree in creative photography. He subsequently worked in the advertising industry for several years, before emigrating to Australia in 1985. Robin has always worked in photography: as a black-and-white printer, a cameraman, a stock photographer, and a freelance photographer.

During the 1990s, Robin contributed to several photo-centric publications in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the UK. This led to a full-time position as the editor of the Sydney-based Commercial Photography magazine, and later, the Australian Photography magazine, a post that he held for 5 years.

In 1997, he founded the critically acclaimed Digital Photography and Design magazine. During this period, he also wrote books for Focal Press and Octopus Press, lectured at seminars in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, as well as in Seattle and Chicago, and ran highly successful photographic workshops in Dubai for 7 years.

In 2000, he started his own publishing business, launching what became Australia's best-selling specialist photo publication: Better Digital Magazine. With this, he pursued his goal of producing clear, well-illustrated information written in jargon-free English.

2 years later, he launched a second magazine, also a first: Better Photoshop Techniques. As a publisher during this period, Robin has been lucky enough to interview some of the biggest names in photography: Elliott Erwitt, David Doubilet, Joe McNally, Gregory Heisler, David Hobby, and even keen photographer and jazz legend Don Burrows on one occasion.

Both magazines ran for more than 10 years, but as distribution and paper costs spiraled and access to free information on the internet exploded, he made the move into teaching. Robin now concentrates on teaching everything photographic, both locally through Sydney University's Centre for Continuing Education as well as through several online institutions, including Udemy, Skillshare, and Eduonix.

When not writing or teaching locally, Robin plans, organizes, and conducts specialist small-group photographic tours of photogenic locations such as South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Oman, Ethiopia, Japan, Iceland, Bali, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, and Cuba.

About the reviewers

David Asch is from Brighton, England. He works in IT and is also an artist and designer with a passion for digital art and technology.

David has been working with digital imaging tools for over 20 years. In that time, he has authored several titles on Adobe Photoshop Elements and Adobe Muse, as well as numerous articles for digital photography publications and online resources. He is an Adobe Certified Expert in Photoshop CC and teaches Photoshop and Photoshop Elements.

Author credits:

Digital Photo Doctor (co-authored) (Reader's Digest)

Focus on Photoshop Elements (Focal Press)

How to Cheat in Photoshop Elements (Focal Press)

Creative Web Design with Adobe Muse (Focal Press)

Liz Staley is no newcomer to digital art. She has been using Photoshop since the late 1990s, though most of her work now is done in Clip Studio Paint. She is the author of *Learn Clip Studio Paint*, also by Packt Publishing, and several other books and courses about Clip Studio Paint. She is currently the owner of Liz Staley Studios, where she uses her love of horses and other animals to educate and promote conservation while also providing beautiful illustrations for other animal lovers. She loves anime, true crime, horror movies, horseback riding, and learning new things. She currently lives in Central Pennsylvania, USA, with her husband.

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Preface

Welcome to *Mastering Adobe Photoshop Elements 2021*. This book is designed to profile, explain, and teach readers the most important aspects of this comprehensive, powerful, and ever-popular photo editing application.

Who this book is for

Mastering Adobe Photoshop Elements 2021 is written by a photographer for photographers of all skill levels. Its target audience is anyone with a thirst for knowledge, a desire to take control of their file organization, and a wish to improve their visual creativity through the incredible power of photo editing.

Although novices might be advised to start at the beginning, the book's structure means it can be sampled almost at random, depending on your skill level and the direction in which you might want to take your work.

It's certainly not an attempt to be the only book you'll ever need on the subject, but I hope it will entertain and inform those who want to escalate their level of expertise, from basic through intermediate levels, and eventually toward being a professional in the fields of image editing, photography, and even design.

What this book covers

Chapter 1, *Photoshop Elements Features Overview*, firstly introduces you to the new features in this latest version. Not surprisingly, this includes several automatic (AI) tools that I'm confident everyone is going to be impressed with.

To fully explain Elements, this chapter sets out how the program has been designed to operate, and includes a **full workflow scenario** as well as a clear explanation of the roles of all five sections of Photoshop Elements: the **Home Screen**, the **Organizer**, and, in the Photo Editor section, **Quick Edit** mode, **Guided Edit** mode, and **Expert Edit** mode.

It also explains the importance of the application's **Catalog**, its **Panels**, **Panel** functions, and the **Panel Bin**, along with the **Create**, **Share**, and **Enhance** menus. Finally, the chapter wraps up with a look at the relationship between Photoshop Elements and **Premiere Elements**, its video editing sibling.

Chapter 2, *Setting Up Photoshop Elements from Scratch*, helps you overcome the first hurdle of buying and installing the software. The next step is to learn how to set up the application to produce the quickest and most efficient results. This chapter deals with how to prepare your camera (setting the correct **color space** in its menu), the **best practices** for imaging computers (Windows and Mac), how to review media, and media backup strategies.

Following that is a description of the best ways to import picture files into the Organizer, plus all the techniques Elements provides for **organizing media**, using organizational tools such as **Places**, **People**, **Events**, **keywords**, **albums**, **tags**, and **metadata**.

You'll also find a section on the different characteristics of the most **popular file formats**, how to **manage catalogs**, how set up the correct **color space** in your camera, and how to manage the basics of **color calibration**.

Chapter 3, *The Basics of Image Editing*, discusses the editing workflow and suggests a number of best practices. It illustrates how to get started with photo editing by covering a range of topics, including an in-depth look at **RAW file editing**, then 10 ways to get an image file open in Elements, plus a look at **picture resolution** (and its impact on image quality). This last topic includes a section on how to **resample** files to make them larger or smaller.

Other techniques discussed here include **cropping image files**, leveling photos with the **Straighten tool**, applying "instant" **photo fixes** in the Organizer, and **file-saving basics**.

Besides getting up to speed with these basics, the chapter also covers how to work with **Version Sets** and **auto tone correction** tools, as well as showing you how to master contrast, color, sharpness, and clarity using **Levels**, **Hue/Saturation**, and the **Shadow/ Highlights** features.

At the end of the chapter, you'll discover how to create perfect skin tones using the **Smooth Skin** feature, plus basic but effective retouching techniques using the amazingly effective **Spot Healing Brush**.

Chapter 4, *Easy Creative Projects*, looks at some truly impressive and highly useful Photoshop Elements features.

In this chapter, features covered include simple but effective "looks" using the massive range of creative **Filters** found in Elements, making your own hand-coloring effects using the new **Colorize Photo** tool, creating wide-screen and multi-deck panoramas with **Photomerge Panorama**, and delving into Elements' amazing **Photomerge Scene Cleaner** and its fun-to-use **Photomerge Faces Guided** Edit feature.

The chapter finishes with an overview of the easy-to-make slideshow, calendar, and greeting cards projects, wrapping up with a couple of very cool **retro effects** found in **Guided Edit** mode: the **Lomo Camera** effect and the elegant split screen **Effects Collage** feature.

Chapter 5, *Advanced Techniques: Layers and Masking*,

Once you get the hang of the basics described in *Chapter 3*, *The Basics of Image Editing*, and the techniques highlighted in *Chapter 4*, *Easy Creative Projects*. You're now ready to turbo-charge your creativity using the power of **layers** and **masking**.

The chapter introduces you to the nuts and bolts of image **Layers**, **Layer Panel** features, **Adjustment Layers**, **Adjustment Layer Masking**, and **Layer Masking**.

If that isn't enough, we also demonstrate how to combine and resize pictures to make a poster, take a look at **Smart Objects** and how to correct **perspective distortion** using the power of **Layer Transformations**, and finally we look at **Layer Blend Modes**.

Chapter 6, *Advanced Techniques: Retouching, Selections, and Text*,

This chapter moves on from the power of layers to fine-tune the use of retouching tools in examples of simple **beauty retouching**, using the powerful **Clone Stamp** tool, the magical **Healing Brush** and **Spot Healing Brush** tools, and the highly underrated **Burn**, **Dodge**, and **Sponge** brushes.

We also tackle the complex world of **Selections**, which, like layers and masking, once mastered, will change the way you view image editing forever. This chapter includes the **Magic Wand tool**, **Selection Brush Tool**, **Quick Selection Tool**, **Auto Selection Tool**, **Refine Selection Brush**, and the **Refine Edge** function.

What many never appreciate is that Elements also features some great graphics tools, including the handy **Horizontal Type Tool** – used, of course, to add text to images – plus all the different **type** and **font** options. We'll also cover how to find, download, and use cool **custom fonts** for special projects.

Chapter 7, *Additional Tools and Features*, moves on from the power of **RAW file editing** and the basics of the **Levels** and **Hue/Saturation** tools and shows you that there are dozens more excellent features to be found in Photoshop Elements. Some are **AI-driven** (artificial intelligence) , while many others stem from the mightily handy **Guided Edit Mode**.

In this chapter, you'll find a selection of more than 20 fabulous features that many might have passed by when performing routine edits. Some are **hugely visual** in their nature, some are designed for fixing photo problems, while others are there just for fun.

These include **Adjust Color Curves**, the **Blur**, **Sharpen**, and **Smudge brushes**, the **Eraser Tools**, **Smart Brush**, **Paint Bucket**, the **Gradient Tool**, the **Haze Removal Tool**, the **Content Aware Tool**, the **Recompose Tool**, the **Move and Scale Object Tool**, **Moving Photos**, **Quote Graphics**, **Convert to Black and White**, **Duotone Effect**, **B&W Color Pop**, **Old Fashioned Photo**, **Perfect Landscape**, **Perfect Portrait**, **Adjust Facial Features** (including its new **Face Tilt** feature), and **Open Closed Eyes**, plus an introduction to **Plugins**.

Chapter 8, *Advanced Drawing and Painting Techniques*,

Interestingly, Elements ships with a wide range of credible **graphics** and **illustration tools**, making it more of an all-round creative powerhouse than many might give it credit for.

To kick off this chapter, we highlight the best ways to master the handy **design** and **layout helpers** that you'll find located under the **View Menu**, the benefits of using **brushes** (and their various behaviors), as well as the **Impressionist** and **Color Replacement Brush** features.

The chapter then shifts gear to highlight how to find and use **custom brushes**, plus how to employ Adobe **vectors**, and then how to customize vectors for specific applications. There's also a short section on **graphics tablets**.

Chapter 9, *Exporting the Finished Work*, encourages you to consider export options once your masterpiece has been fully edited.

In this chapter, we look at the various resolution requirements for different social media platforms, as well as how to prepare files for print. Because so many photographers are now so reliant on the internet, it's important to get a handle on how to prepare pictures for best display (using the **Save for the Web** feature), as well as how best to **sharpen** files for different print and online applications using the industry-standard **Unsharp Mask** tool, the generic **Sharpen Filters**, **High Pass Sharpening**, and more, including how to use the amazing **Haze Reduction Tool**.

Finally, this chapter takes a good look at how to export multiple instances of your work (with the **Export as New Files feature**), as well as how to bulk-process files using the effective **Process Multiple Files** utility.

Chapter 10, *Troubleshooting*, deals with how to fix all those things that can go wrong when trying to manage a database of thousands, or tens of thousands, of images, and how to deal with image files that are not quite perfect. The chapter starts by explaining **file saving protocols**: what options to go for, including the new cloud-based **File Save** option. We also investigate what to do if files get **lost** or **disconnected** from the catalog, how to fully utilize the features of the powerful **Find** menu, **adjust dates for different time zones**, as well as how to re-instate a lost or damaged **Catalog**.

You will also find a section on how to fix skin tone color (**Adjust Color for Skin Tones**), fix a color cast (**Remove Color Cast**), use the amazingly quirky **Liquify Filter**, and finally, how to access more information via the **Help** menu.

Chapter 11, *Feature Appendix*, highlights all the tool features, panels, processes, and menus in Photoshop Elements. Use it to get more information on all the features in Elements, and check out the personal feedback on how effective or important many of these features might be to beginners.

To get the most out of this book

The point of this publication is that you don't need to have extensive experience before starting out in the world of photo editing. That was the premise of the original Adobe application a dozen or so versions ago, and today, that idea, with the introduction of so many new AI-driven features, is stronger than ever.

That said, it would be immensely useful to have a fundamental understanding of how computers operate, including Macs and Windows computers, and perhaps an inkling of basic image editing, just to get started. Also, be prepared to experiment with your images as much as you have the time for it. It's the best way to learn.

Develop a network of friends or mentors who might be able to help you if you get stuck. To do this, you may find that it's a good idea to join a camera club in order to get help with both your photography and post-processing questions.

Above all, have fun, and experiment as much as you have the time for it…

Download the sample practice files

To make the learning process more complete, follow the download link below to access the full color images used in this book. Use these images to practice the techniques described in this book.

Download the color images

We will provide all the color images and screenshots/diagrams used in the book for you to practice. You can download it here: `https://static.packt-cdn.com/downloads/9781800566996_ColorImages.zip`.

You can also find the image bundle here: `https://github.com/PacktPublishing/Mastering-Adobe-Photoshop-Elements-2021-Third-Edition`.

Conventions used

There are a number of text conventions used throughout this book.

`Code in text`: Indicates code words in text, database table names, folder names, filenames, file extensions, pathnames, dummy URLs, user input, and Twitter handles. Here is an example: "When you do that, you'll notice that Elements forces you to save the file either in the Photoshop (`.psd`) or **Tagged Image File Format** (**TIFF**) file format (`.tif`)."

Bold: Indicates a new term, an important word, or words that you see onscreen. For example, words in menus or dialog boxes appear in the text like this. Here is an example: "You can modify the accuracy of this brush by choosing the **Add** or **Subtract** buttons."

> Tips or important notes
>
> Appear like this.

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1

Photoshop Elements Features Overview

Adobe Photoshop Elements is a pixel-based graphics photo editing application that was first released in 2001. Its appearance followed on from an entry-level program called **Photoshop LE**, a light edition of Photoshop, which was a product made available mostly for students and teachers, though it's sometimes bundled with other hardware products at the point of sale. If you count its LE predecessor, Photoshop Elements 2021 is now in its 21st version.

Initially, Photoshop Elements was released as a basic, entry-level tool for the consumer. Moms and dads trying to get their collective heads around digital technology. But over the years it has dramatically expanded its feature set, inheriting many significant professional-level tools from its more complex sibling, Adobe Photoshop.

So, how different is Elements from Photoshop? Interestingly, Adobe maintains that the principal difference between the two is that Elements is still essentially a screen-based, **RGB (Red, Green, and Blue)** program, whereas Photoshop CC is designed to convert RGB files for work in the commercial **CMYK print space**—making it the go-to graphics application for all professionals working in print.

However, the market has changed significantly in the past 15 years, with so many more businesses trading online; therefore, the demand for print-ready conversions has reduced significantly. In my own experience, I have found that any good commercial print shop will gladly convert Elements' RGB files to its preferred CMYK color space, usually with only a nominal prepress charge, thus enabling everything produced using Elements to be commercially printed to the highest degree of quality.

In Elements 2021, you'll find an astonishing range of sophisticated tools, features, and creative capabilities packed into an affordable editing package, making it not only a serious professional tool, but also one that is simpler to use than Photoshop CC.

As you will quickly come to appreciate, this software is, in fact, made up of two separate applications and a number of different modes designed to address different user experience levels, all rolled into one bundle called Elements. Although it has technically evolved from other products such as Adobe Photoshop LE and Photoshop Album, it's now an incredibly powerful and cohesive standalone tool designed for transforming photographic images, while remaining both affordable and fairly easy to use.

What's important to learn in this chapter is that it's not necessary to know everything about Elements to succeed in editing your work—you can use just one, or a combination, of its components, to produce impressive, vibrant edits, depending on your experience, creativity, and, indeed, your drive for editing perfection.

As you will see from the following panel, this chapter is all about learning what each bit of Elements does—and therefore their relevance to your own image editing workflow. And if you are indeed just starting out, the sections here will help you understand what's important right from the outset—and what can be referred to later, when you have more time, and experience, to take these more advanced features on board.

What you'll learn in this chapter:

- What's new in Elements 2021?
- How Elements is designed to work
- A typical workflow example
- The Home Screen
- The Organizer
- The Catalog
- The Edit modes: Quick Edit
- The Edit modes: Guided Edit
- The Edit modes: Expert Edit
- Panels and the Panel Bin
- Panel functions
- Create and Share menus
- The Enhance Menu
- Video and Premiere Elements

New Feature: Instead of just three pyramids, why not use Elements' new **Scale and Move** tool to fake a whole row of pyramids? This new feature not only provides tremendous creative opportunities, it's also a lot of fun.

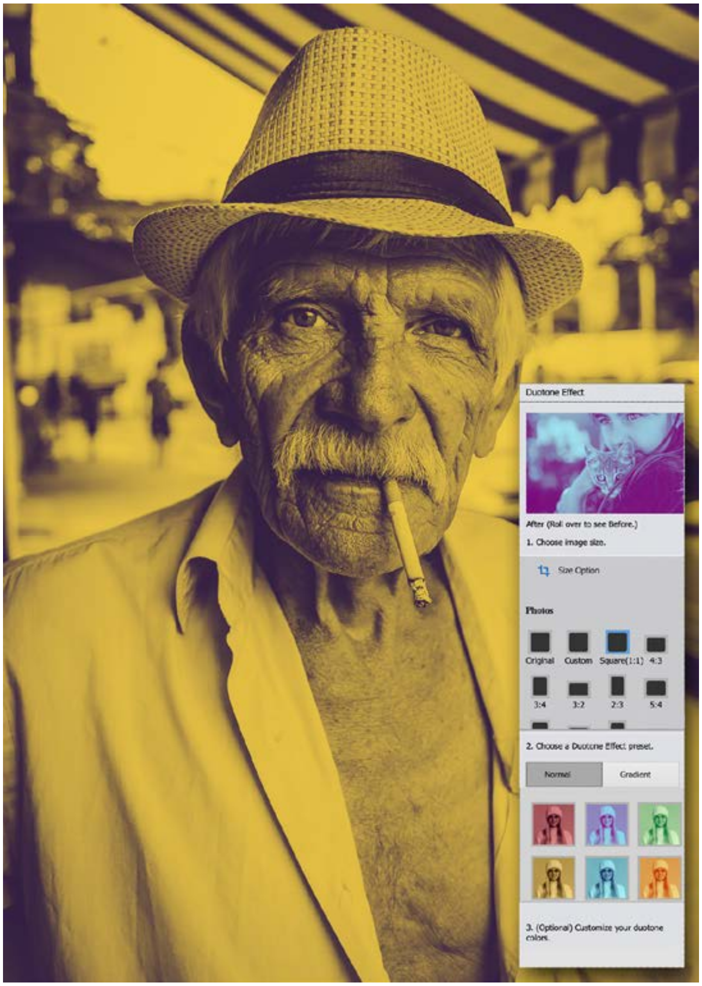
We will provide all the color images and screenshots/diagrams used in the book for you to practice. You can download it here: `https://static.packt-cdn.com/downloads/9781800566996_ColorImages.zip`

What's New in Photoshop Elements 2021?

As expected, this version of Adobe Photoshop Elements has a smattering of new features designed to bolster its already strong position in artificial intelligence-driven image editing (AI editing turns tasks that are normally performed manually into semi-automatic processes, thus making the process faster and significantly easier).

Previous versions of this software saw the release of a few select features that were quite groundbreaking in their scope and design. For me it all started several versions ago when Adobe began releasing increasingly sophisticated applications for its clever Photomerge utility. This was a semi-automated tool used to stitch panorama sections together—and it worked pretty well, even if the sections were not 100% on the level, overlapping correctly, or in the right orientation. As Photomerge became increasingly sophisticated, Adobe released Photomerge Scene Cleaner, Photomerge Exposure, and Photomerge Faces.

Then along came the crazy but fun Adjust Facial Features tool, a utility for opening blinking or fully closed eyes (**Enhance>Open Closed Eyes**). And in the last version, we discovered the superb automated picture coloring utility (**Adjust>Colorize Photo**) along with Skin Smoothing, Object Removal, and Subject Selection, all of which were greatly helpful features.



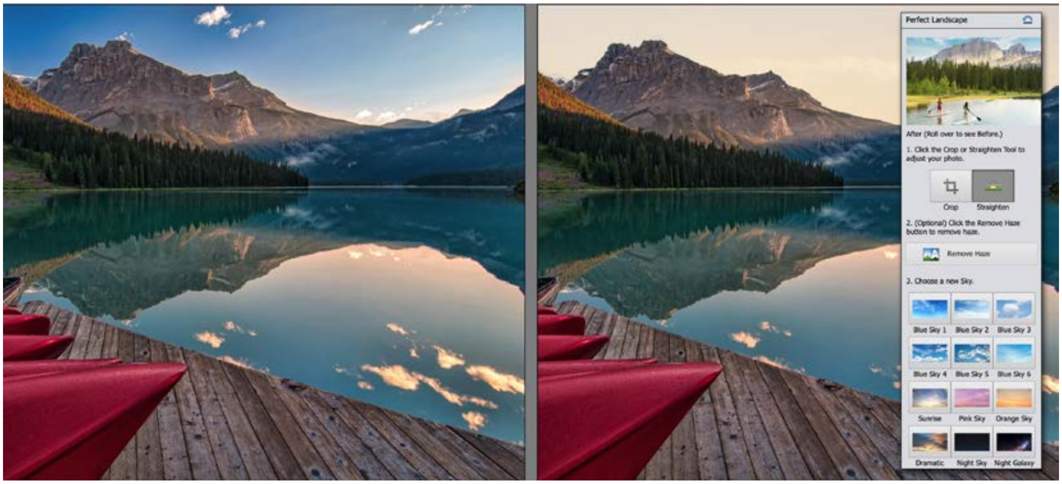
After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Choose image size.

2. Choose a Duotone Effect preset.

3. (Optional) Customize your duotone colors.

Duotone magic: Another cracking feature in this new version has to be a repackaging of one of my all-time favourite color tinting modes called duotone. In this case it's a new Guided Edit feature called the **Duotone Effect**, which, at the press of a couple of buttons, produces stunning tinted or fully re-colored images to great effect. (Ironically, Adobe badges this new effect as "modern," even though the effect has been in Photoshop for more than a quarter of a century.)



Perfect Landscape

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Click the Crop or Straighten Tool to adjust your photo.

2. (Optional) Click the Remove Haze button to remove haze.

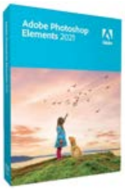
3. Choose a new Sky.

Perfect Landscape: Another great new feature in Elements is this little gem, located in the **Guided** Edit panel. I think it should be called the "sky replacement tool" because that's exactly what it does, but it matches up with its nextdoor neighbour in **Guided**, called the Perfect Portrait feature. It works well—Adobe has even gone to the trouble of supplying a dozen skies with which to replace your less attractive ones, a nice touch.

Talking of new material, you'll find that Elements 2021 has some great new features. One interesting development has been the introduction of features whose end product are video files, not still images. **Moving Photos** and **Quote Graphics** both have a leaning toward video in the sense that the finished products can be output as animated graphics (in the GIF file format). But don't let that dissuade you from trying them—both are totally impressive (*see p.10 in this chapter for a description of the different software parts that make up Photoshop Elements 2021*).

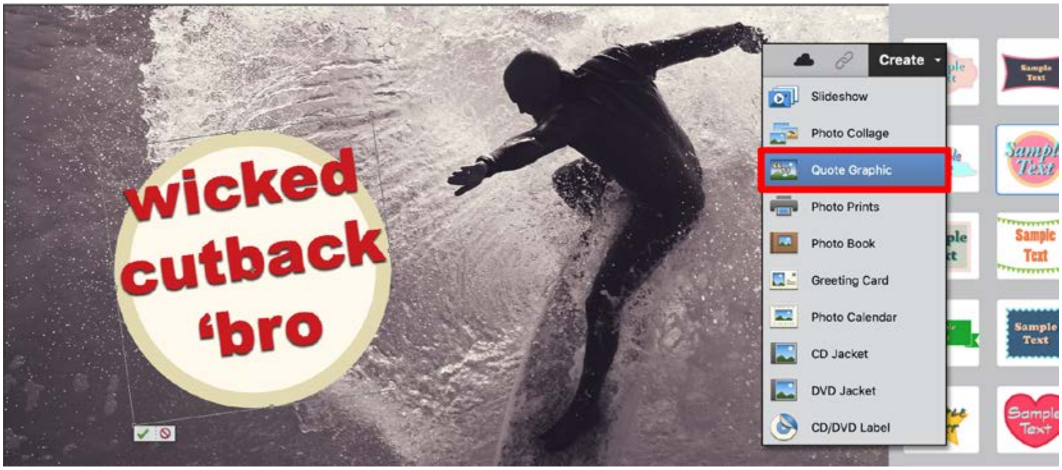
You'll also encounter a few new guided edits (**Duotone Effect**, **Move and Scale Object**, and **Perfect Landscape**) and more interactivity in the Home Screen where Adobe dips into your Organizer folio to use your images to construct (and demonstrate) an expanded range of **Auto Creations** and other inspirational examples to get your creative juices set to overload.

Elements 2021 also features some fine-tuning to its functionality, incorporating a handy auto backup function for the catalog—so you never lose data should there be a computer problem. Plus you'll see that Smart Tags are now added to your photos based on subjects like sunsets and birthdays, and the people in your photos are also recognized, so it's easy to tag and find them later (Powered by Adobe Sensei).



Is it worth upgrading a previous version of Elements to this shiny new 2021 product? This is one of the most-asked questions I get and my answer is: "Of course!" I even recommend this product over buying Adobe Photoshop CC because, for all but high-end commercial users, Photoshop Elements has all the tools you are ever likely to need. Also the company continues to develop its AI features, which, as you'll experience in this new product, are truly impressive!

One pyramid. Or two? Or four. Maybe more? I had great fun with this innovative and easy-to-use Guided Edit feature. It's essentially a semi-automated copy-and-paste tool, wrapped into an easily accessible package. Use it to copy and paste, as I did in Egypt, or copy and replace—which means that the pyramid I originally copied from gets automatically removed using the retouching brush! This is a smart and fun tool to play with.


wicked
cutback
'bro
Create
Slideshow
Photo Collage
Quote Graphic
Photo Prints
Photo Book
Greeting Card
Photo Calendar
CD Jacket
DVD Jacket
CD/DVD Label
Sample Text
Sample Text
Sample Text
Sample Text
Sample Text

Please quote me: Elements' new **Quote Graphic** tool (**Create** menu) enables users to place text witticisms over images or specifically picked graphics to create Facebook pages, Instagram pages, or just cool graphics that can be used as illustrations for a photo book.

How Elements is designed to work

Elements designers have produced an application that offers everything, from a comprehensive method of file organization (vital in such a media-rich environment) to a highly sophisticated level of editing prowess. It'll look a bit scary if you have not used this program before but all I can say is don't let this get in the way! Elements can be used in any number of different ways, from super easy, to super complex. It's entirely up to you which path you choose—and of course, you can chop and change your editing style whenever the situation suits. Its "official" workflow might be something like this.

With your images already transferred to a computer, install and start Elements. Start the program and from the **Home Screen**, click the **Organizer** button:

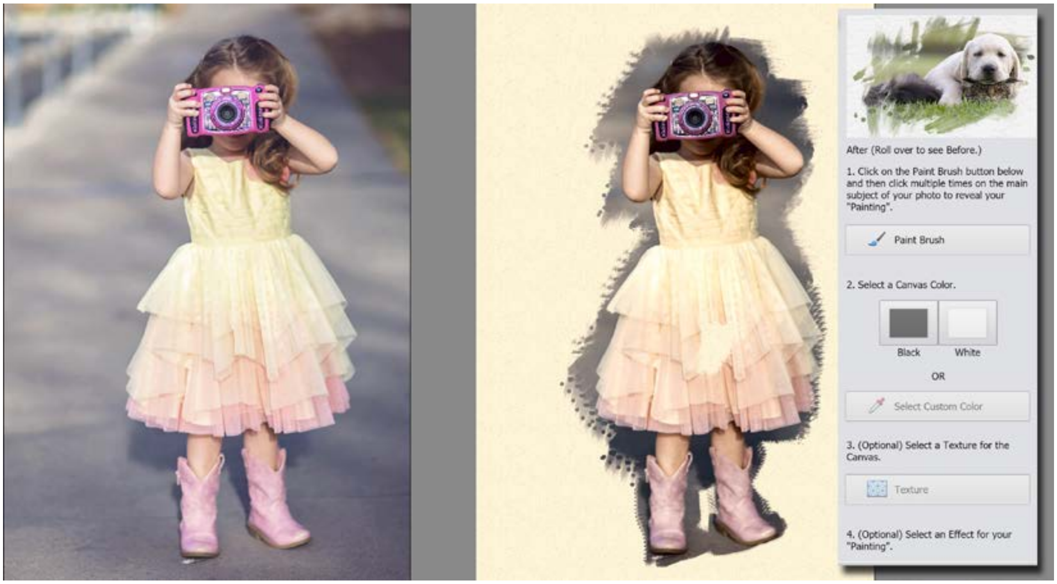
- Use Organizer to import your media bit by bit so as not to overwhelm yourself—you can import stills, music, and even video clips.
- Sort your media into small, manageable groups using features such as: **Albums**, **Keywords**, **Tags**, **Metadata**, **Face recognition**, and **GPS** co-ordinates—but there's no need to do this all at once. This is more a project for a rainy day.

Once your images are sorted, move on to the following:

- Perform basic edits on files displayed in the Organizer—using, for example, the **Instant Fix** tab (bottom left of the screen) or bring them across to the Elements Photo Editor (a separate app from the Organizer). To bring them over, right-click the thumbnail image, and choose **Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor** from the pop-out menu. This opens the file in either the Quick, Guided, or Expert Edit mode. (Note: you can easily chop and change between these edit windows at any time).
- Edit pictures using the **Quick Edit** mode. This part of Elements contains a wide range of easy, one-click photo fixes plus loads of special effects.
- Or, try editing your work using the more complex Expert Edit mode.
- Once finished, save the file as a `.jpg` (if destined for a photo book) or a Tiff (`.tif`) file or a Photoshop (`.psd`) file, if destined for print or more complex editing processes (such as retouching or adding text).

If you are not 100% sure about how to go about your picture editing, Elements offers the excellent **Guided Edit** mode, designed to hold your hand while it escorts you through the edit cycle in a clear step-by step process. This is easy to follow and effective.

I hope that by reading through the various chapters and sections in this book, you'll begin to devise your own workflow. Remember, there's no right or wrong way to edit pictures, just the one that works best for you. Experiment with the different edit modes using the same file and you'll quickly come to appreciate what works for you—and what doesn't.



After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Click on the Paint Brush button below and then click multiple times on the main subject of your photo to reveal your "Painting".

Paint Brush

2. Select a Canvas Color.

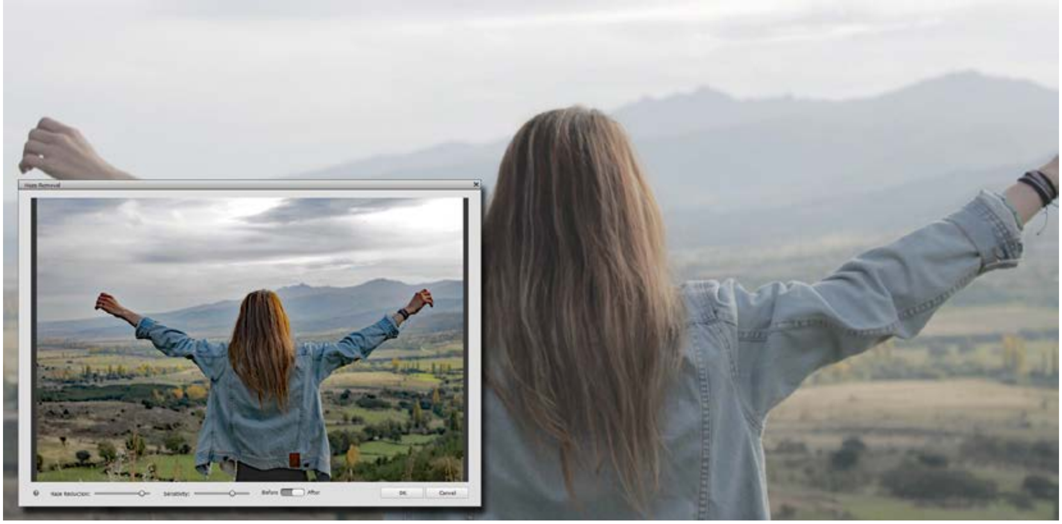
Black
White
OR
Select Custom Color

3. (Optional) Select a Texture for the Canvas.

Texture

4. (Optional) Select an Effect for your "Painting".

Guided Edit mode: The Guided Edit is as perfect for simple tone fixes as it is for more complex and creative project-type effects, like this striking **Painterly Effect**—which took me all of two minutes to complete.


Haze Removal
Haze Reduction:
Sensitivity:
Before
After
OK
Cancel

Expert Edit mode: Even if you jump into the deep end and choose **Expert Edit**, many of its features, such as the excellent **Haze Removal** tool seen here, are easy to use and produce, in most picture examples, really impressive results (inset).

A typical workflow example

For your reference, here's how I use Elements:

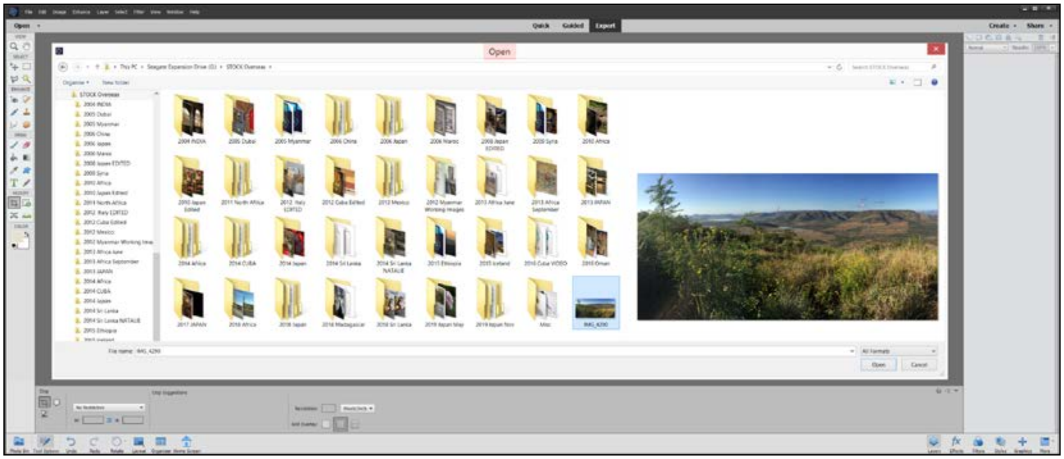
First off, I always transfer images from a card reader directly into a pre-named folder on my computer or external hard drive (Mac or PC, whichever I am using at the time).

After each download, I try to remember to back up everything to a second drive—by dragging and dropping from one drive to the other (my external Mac drives are formatted in the ExFat format so they are 100% readable on both PC and Mac).

Card reader: Here's a glimpse of how I work with images. I manually download images straight into labeled folders. This is my **travel file**—so folders are labeled by year and destination. Inside each are more folders corresponding to each day of travel in that location.

As I always specifically name folders each time I download a new batch of files, I don't need to use the Organizer a great deal—but I would recommend that beginners use it because, when it comes to making sense of all your work, you'll find it incredibly helpful.

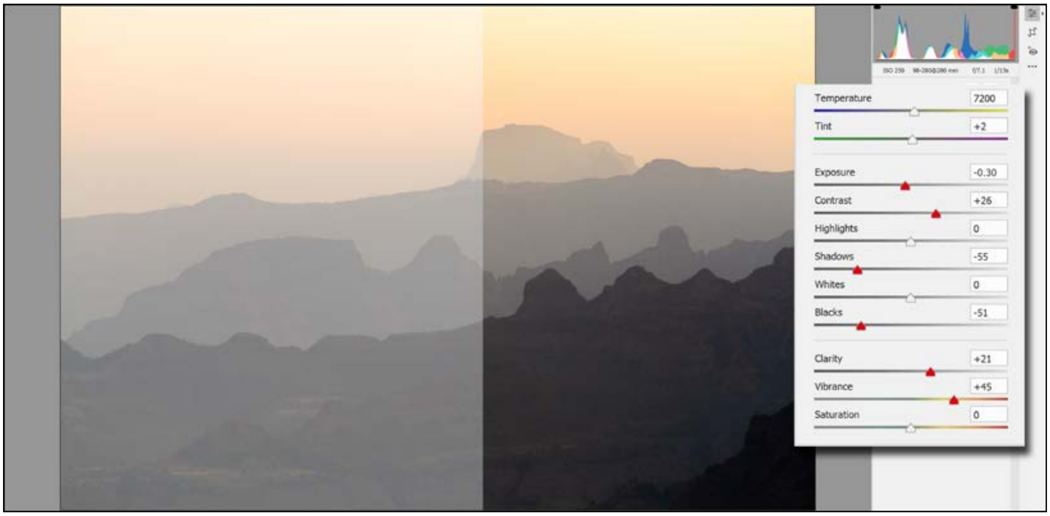
I work almost exclusively in the Expert Edit mode and always open images for editing using the keyboard shortcut *Ctrl/Cmd* + *O* for File Open (PC/Mac).



Opening images for editing: In the **Open** dialog window, I navigate to the folder I'm after, then double-click the icon to open it. I'm lucky in that although I cannot remember what I did last week, I can always remember exactly where all my images have been saved to. This somewhat old-fashioned technique has worked well for me for many years.

How I edit images

I've learned from years of picture editing that though nearly every digital file might look fine on the camera's LCD screen, it's usually a bit lacklustre once on the computer. This could be because the original lighting was poor, or because the screen is not calibrated. But it's most likely caused by the camera's operating software.



Temperature 7200
Tint +2
Exposure -0.30
Contrast +26
Highlights 0
Shadows -55
Whites 0
Blacks -51
Clarity +21
Vibrance +45
Saturation 0

Editing Raw Files: Double-click a RAW file and it **must** open first in this special edit window. Here you can achieve an amazing range of tonal improvements—from simple contrast and color boosts, to noise reduction, cropping, and sharpening. The original is on the left, and the edited version (right) has had five sliders adjusted (in red) to add visual drama to the file.

Here's how I (try to) make each image pop off the page:

Step one: The first thing is to correct the global tones in the file (using the contrast slider).

Step two: If it's in the RAW file format, it opens in the Camera RAW window—see the preceding before/after. (RAW files are large, and contain more picture information than the more commonly used JPEG file format.)

Step three: Once there, I adjust the brightness and contrast, before fine-tuning the photo with the **Highlight**, **Whites**, **Shadows**, and **Blacks** sliders (but only if it needs it). This is normally enough to make the file look sharper, contrastier, and more colorful.

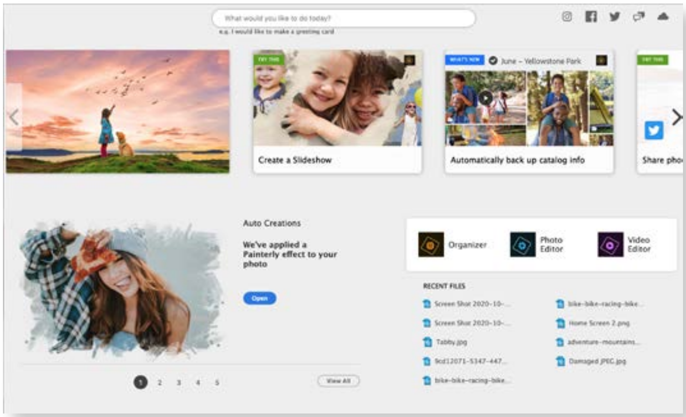
Step four: I save the file, giving it a proper name, so it can be readily identified later.

When editing non-RAW files I use **Levels** for contrast and brightness adjustments, the Hue/Saturation tool to add/subtract color where needed, and, if required, I finish using the Dodge/Burn brushes to exaggerate local darkness or lightness areas, plus sometimes the Spot Healing brush to remove imperfections.

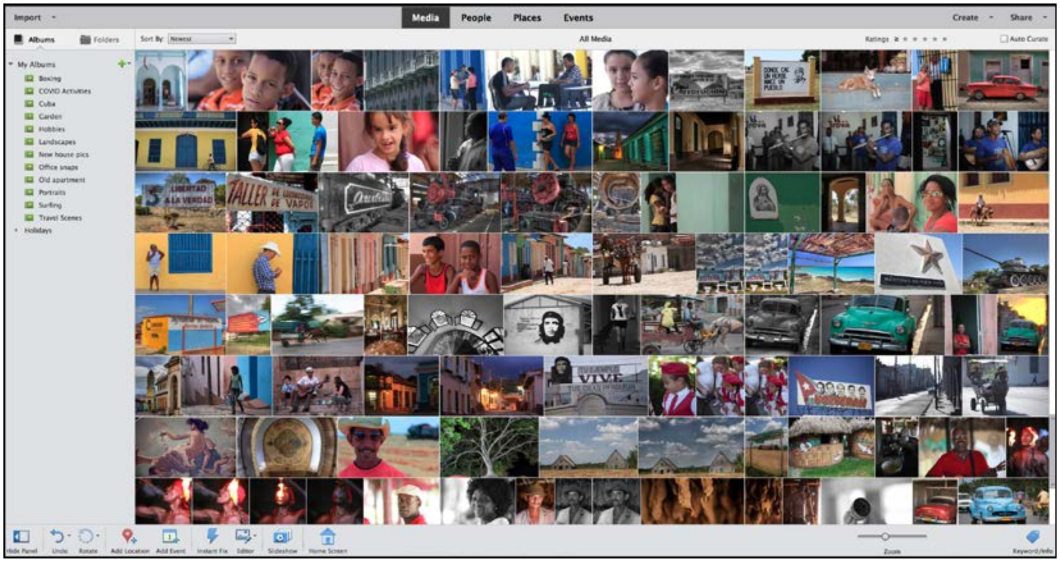
As with RAW files, I save the file with a proper name, either as a `.jpg` file (when it's being added to a photo book) or in `.psd` (Photoshop) format for when additional editing is required. Let's move on to begin examining the different parts of this editing powerhouse.

The five faces of Adobe Photoshop Elements 2021

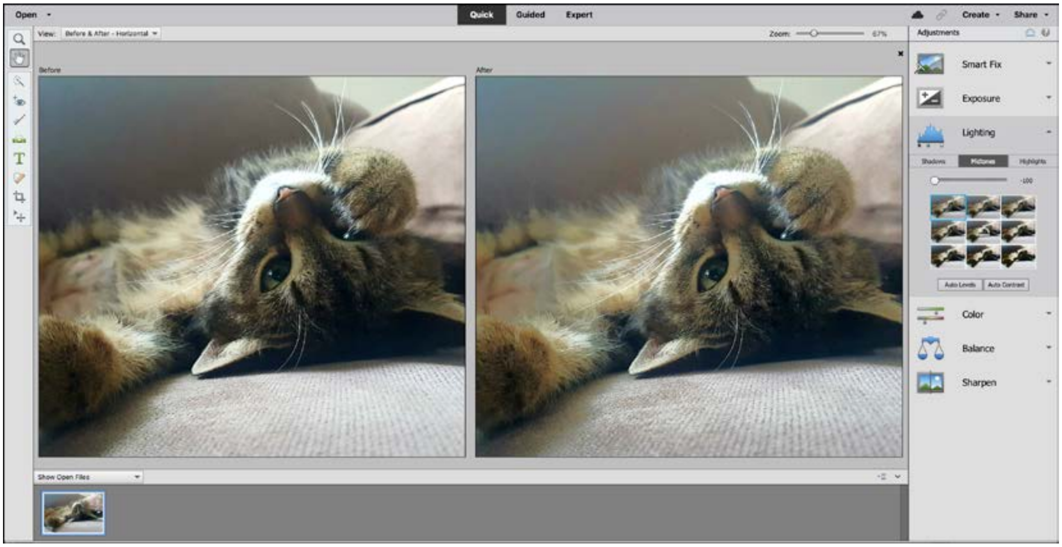
Here's a brief overview of the five main parts of Photoshop Elements that you'll encounter when working on your images. Generally, you might use just one or two of these windows—for example, the Organizer and the Expert Edit mode. But of course, you can freely chop and change between the editor and the Organizer, depending on your requirements and skills.


What would you like to do today?
e.g. I would like to make a greeting card
Create a Slideshow
June – Yellowstone Park
Automatically back up catalog info
Share pho
Auto Creations
We've applied a Painterly effect to your photo
Open
Organizer
Photo Editor
Video Editor
RECENT FILES
View All

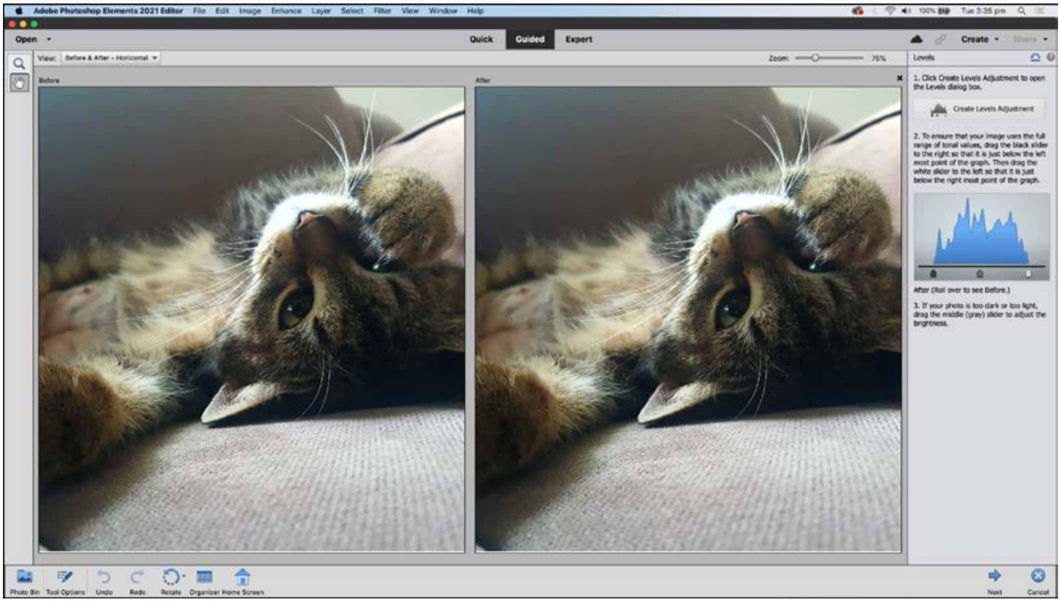
This is the **Home Screen**, the first panel you will see in Elements. Use it to gain inspiration from the range of auto creations, as a source of instruction (from the web links) or simply as a gateway to the other parts of Elements: Organizer and the Quick, Guided, and Expert Edit modes.


Import
Media
People
Places
Events
Create
Share
Albums
Folders
Sort By: Newest
All Media
Ratings
Auto Curate
My Albums
Boxing
COVID Activities
Cuba
Garden
Hobbies
Landscapes
New house pics
Office snaps
Old apartment
Portraits
Surfing
Travel Scenes
Holidays
Hide Panel
Undo
Rotate
Add Location
Add Event
Instant Fix
Editor
Slideshow
Home Screen
Zoom
Keyword/Info

This is the **Organizer**. Use this part of Elements to import and view all your pictures, Photoshop Elements projects, video, and music clips. Use Organizer to sort your growing image collection into Albums, add Keywords, Tags, captions, and more. Or just use it as a jumping-off point to take images to one of the other three editing panels: the Quick, Guided, or Expert edit modes.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 67%
Before
After
Adjustments
Smart Fix
Exposure
Lighting
Shadows
Midtones
Highlights
Auto Levels
Auto Contrast
Color
Balance
Sharpen
Show Open Files

This is the **Quick Edit window**. Use this to make simple, quick and impressive edits to images brought directly from Organizer (you can also open image files directly from folders). Here the adjustment is for **Lighting** (also called **Levels**). Set the image to display singly or as a twin, 'before and after' display. Its panels (lower right-hand side of screen) offer (tone) **Adjustments**, **Effects**, **Textures**, and **Frames** options.


Adobe Photoshop Elements 2021 Editor
File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
Select
Filter
View
Window
Help
100%
Tue 3:35 pm
Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 75%
Before
After
Levels
Create Levels Adjustment
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

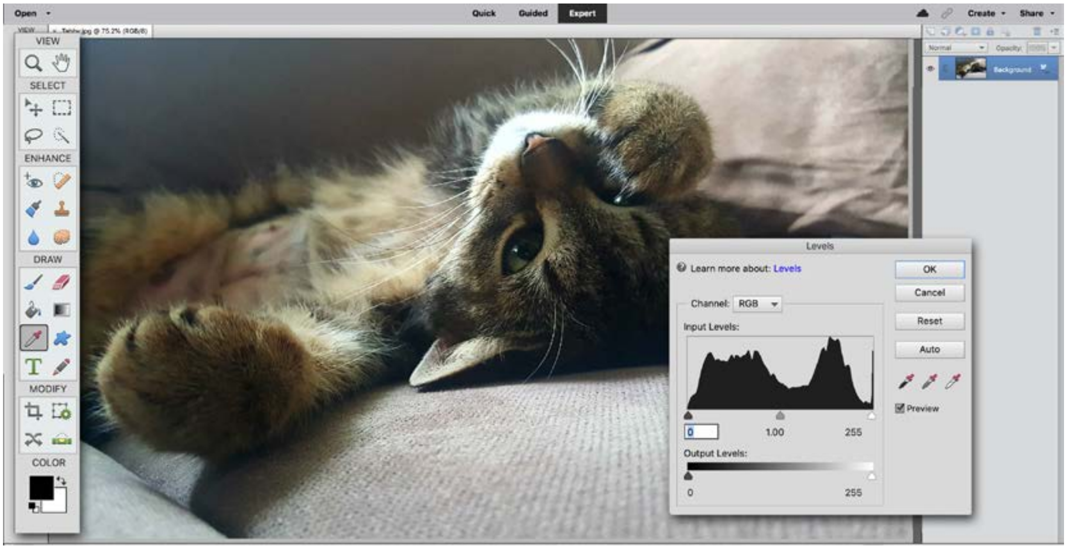
1. Click Create Levels Adjustment to open the Levels dialog box.

2. To ensure that your image uses the full range of tonal values, drag the black slider to the right so that it is just below the left most point of the graph. Then drag the white slider to the left so that it is just below the right most point of the graph.

After (Roll over to see Before.)

3. If your photo is too dark or too light, drag the middle (gray) slider to adjust the brightness.

This is the **Guided Edit window**. Use this to edit your photos by following the step-by-step instructions on the right-hand side of the screen. Here it is set to the **Levels** tool, a brightness and contrast adjustment feature. Note: all three edit modes are interchangeable.

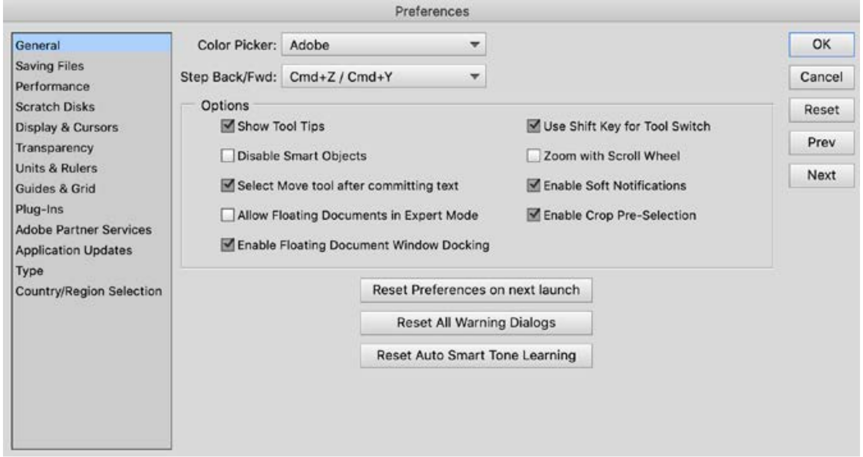

Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
VIEW
SELECT
ENHANCE
DRAW
MODIFY
COLOR
Normal
Opacity:
Background
Levels
Learn more about: Levels
OK
Cancel
Reset
Auto
Preview

Channel: RGB

Input Levels: 0 1.00 255

Output Levels: 0 255

This is the **Expert Edit window**. As the name suggests, this is the most complex part of Elements because, unlike the Quick and Guided modes, it has few instructions and even fewer one-button "fixes." You have to know what you want to achieve first—then you need to know what tools and techniques are required to make it all happen—so some prior experience would be of considerable benefit. Here it is also showing the brightness and contrast adjusting tool, Levels—essentially the same as in the previous two edit modes—with a few extra features.


Preferences

- General
- Saving Files
- Performance
- Scratch Disks
- Display & Cursors
- Transparency
- Units & Rulers
- Guides & Grid
- Plug-Ins
- Adobe Partner Services
- Application Updates
- Type
- Country/Region Selection

Color Picker: Adobe

Step Back/Fwd: Cmd+Z / Cmd+Y

Options

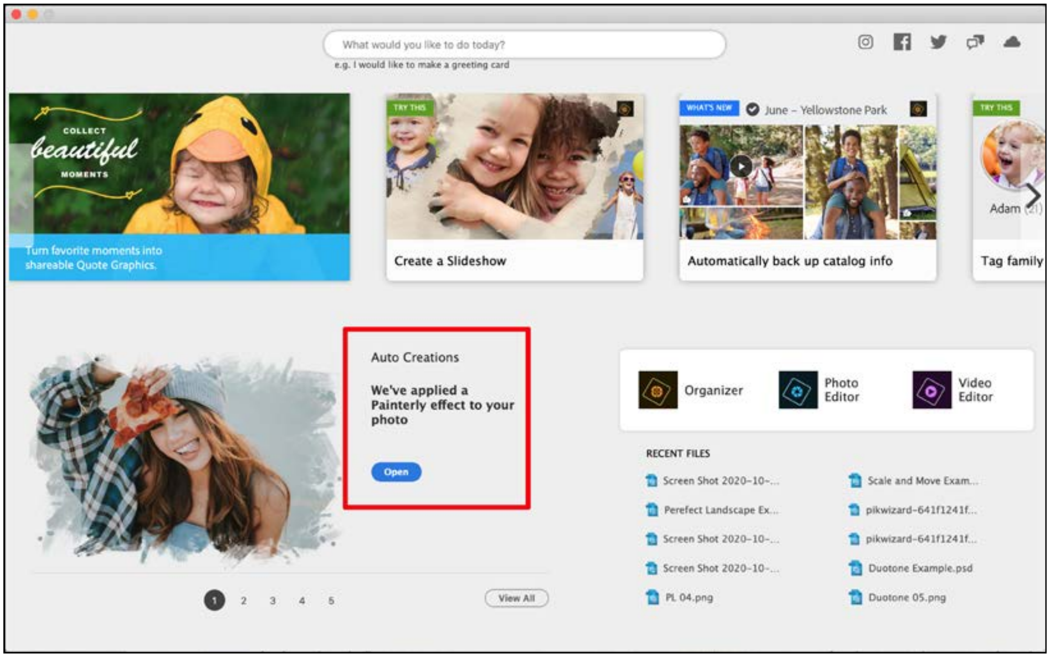
☑ Show Tool Tips
☐ Disable Smart Objects
☑ Select Move tool after committing text
☐ Allow Floating Documents in Expert Mode
☑ Enable Floating Document Window Docking
☑ Use Shift Key for Tool Switch
☐ Zoom with Scroll Wheel
☑ Enable Soft Notifications
☑ Enable Crop Pre-Selection

OK
Cancel
Reset
Prev
Next
Reset Preferences on next launch
Reset All Warning Dialogs
Reset Auto Smart Tone Learning

This is Elements' **Preferences** panel (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *K*). It's not one of the five main panels, but it's worth knowing about—it does have its uses. Here you can change things such as how files are saved, units of measurement, grid size and color, some key shortcuts, computer resources, transparency settings, plug-in data, and much more.

The Home screen

What was referred to in Adobe Photoshop Elements 2018 as the eLive screen is now the Home screen. It's the first thing you see when Elements starts and, like its predecessor, is there to provide users with creative inspiration on how to edit images, embark on creative projects, and use its many auto creations (highlighted in red in the following screenshot). You can use it for learning how to accomplish basic editing tasks and for fun activities such as creating YouTube memes, automated slideshows, movies, and more, simply by clicking any of the pictorial links on the Home screen—which then take you to an online tutorial.


What would you like to do today?
e.g. I would like to make a greeting card
COLLECT
beautiful
MOMENTS
TRY THIS
WHAT'S NEW
June – Yellowstone Park
TRY THIS
Adam (21)
Create a Slideshow
Automatically back up catalog info
Tag family
Auto Creations
Open
Organizer
Photo Editor
Video Editor
RECENT FILES
Screen Shot 2020-10-...
Perefect Landscape Ex...
Screen Shot 2020-10-...
Screen Shot 2020-10-...
PL 04.png
Scale and Move Exam...
pikwizard-641f1241f...
pikwizard-641f1241f...
Duotone Example.psd
Duotone 05.png
1
2
3
4
5
View All

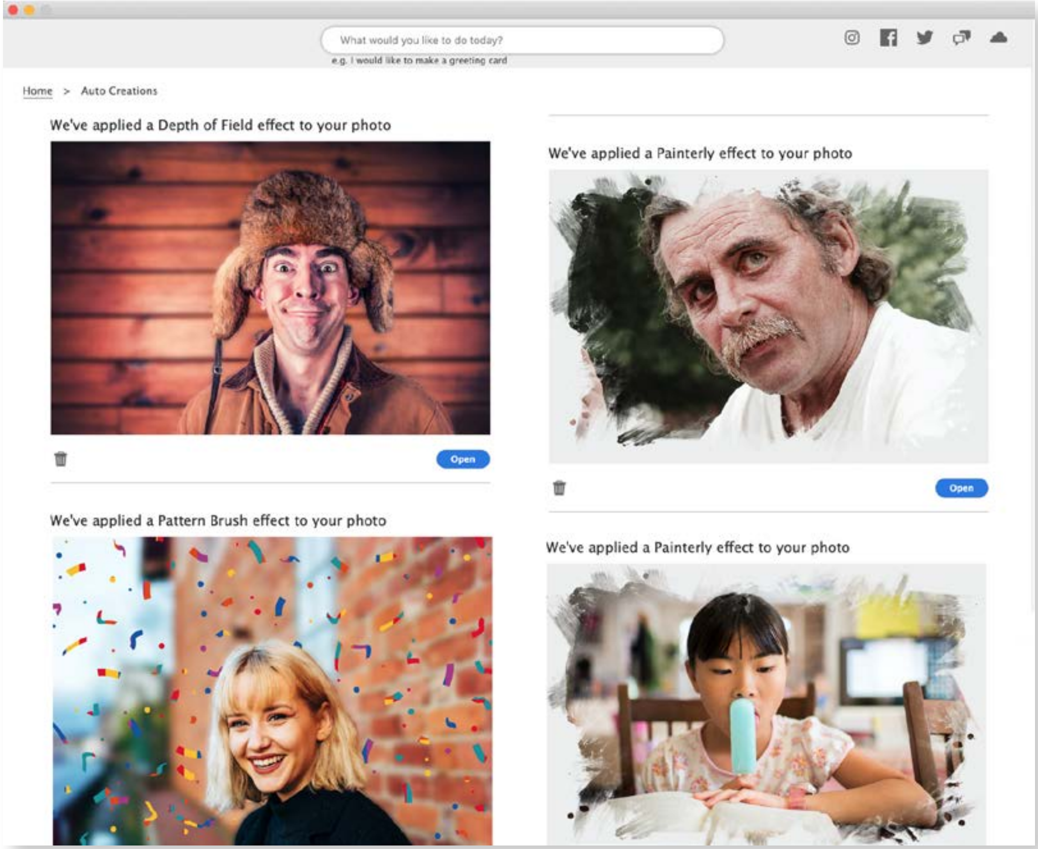
Turn favorite moments into shareable Quote Graphics.

We've applied a Painterly effect to your photo

Getting started: As you can see, this is the new Elements 2021 Home screen. You can use it as a source of creative inspiration, but also as the go-to screen to open previously edited files, or to start one of the applications: **Organizer**, **Photo Editor**, or **Video Editor**.

The screen displays a short (text) list of previously opened files, which is a nice feature, plus shortcuts to open the photo editor, the media browser (called the Organizer), and the video editor, plus links to Adobe, Facebook, and Twitter.

It's important to note that if you've not bought Elements and Premiere Elements together as a bundle, clicking the third icon, **Video Editor**, will prompt you to download and 'try' Premiere Elements. Buying the bundle saves a fair chunk of money and makes sense because so many of us shoot video—plus you'll find several new features in Elements 2021 are now animated and so must be saved in a motion graphic file format such as `.gif`.


What would you like to do today?
e.g. I would like to make a greeting card
Home > Auto Creations
Open
Open

We've applied a Depth of Field effect to your photo

We've applied a Painterly effect to your photo

We've applied a Pattern Brush effect to your photo

We've applied a Painterly effect to your photo

Auto creations are amazing—Elements picks random images from your Organizer collections and applies a selection of AI-driven features to them. I was quite surprised when I first saw this because I had forgotten that Adobe was doing the hard work for me! Though its image selection isn't always appropriate, it's still an effective preview feature.

If you are already using Premiere Elements 2021, you'll notice several new features, including the very impressive auto selections and tracking plus auto Smart Tags to help file organization, simplified noise reduction, a sky replacement tool, and more. But that's a topic for another book...

Photoshop Elements users will note that there are now more **Auto Creations** appearing in the lower left-hand part of the screen. Elements uses images from the Organizer to demonstrate various features, which is a nice way to get creative.

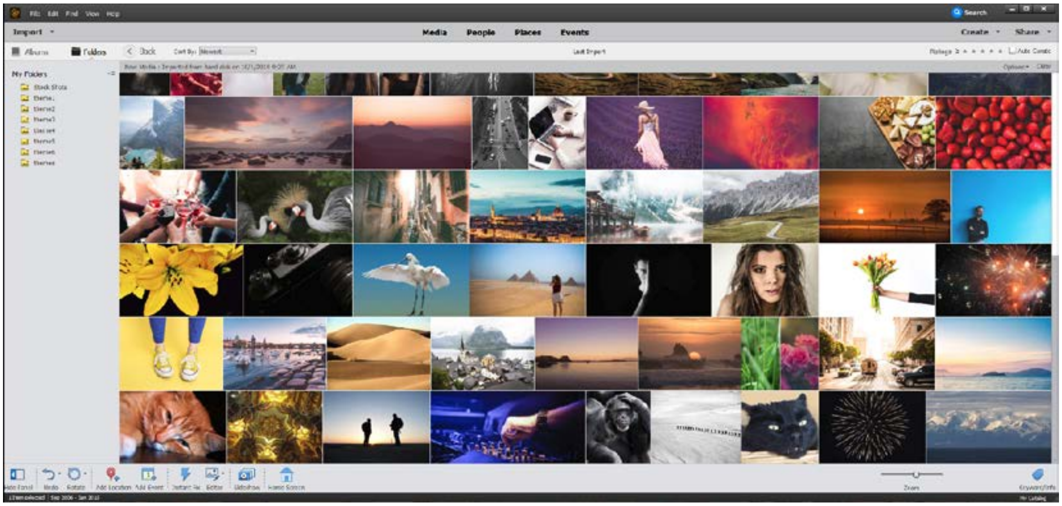
Because the Home page is linked to Adobe's servers, it also provides access to the **Help** menu, plus thousands more pages of inspiration covering a massive range of topics, from basic tone enhancement and scrapbooking to pro-standard retouching techniques and much, much more.

The Organizer

One drawback to digital photography is that we accumulate **masses of digital images** and other assets, such as audio tracks and video clips. Keeping track of everything on a monthly basis, let alone annually, is becoming something of a nightmare, especially if you plan on upgrading your skill set from keen amateur status to something appropriate to a professional occupation.

Sorting everything into meaningful collections, therefore, is the main function of the Organizer. Once installed, you'll note that it runs as a separate application, albeit one with almost inseparable ties to the photo editing part of Elements, and, indeed, with its video editing partner, Adobe Premiere Elements (often sold with Elements as a bundle).

Images and other digital assets are imported into the Organizer and sorted into a meaningful groups using a range of clever tools such as albums, keywords, labels, place and people tags, star ratings, and metadata. Because all of these attributes can be applied to your images, its organizational and file search capabilities are very extensive, making it one of the best asset management systems in the business


File
Edit
Find
View
Help
Search
Import
Media
People
Places
Events
Create
Share
Albums
Folders
Back
Sort By:
Newest
Last Import
My Folders
Stock Shots
Rotate
Add Location
Add Event
Editor
Slideshow
Home Screen
Zoom
Keyword/Info

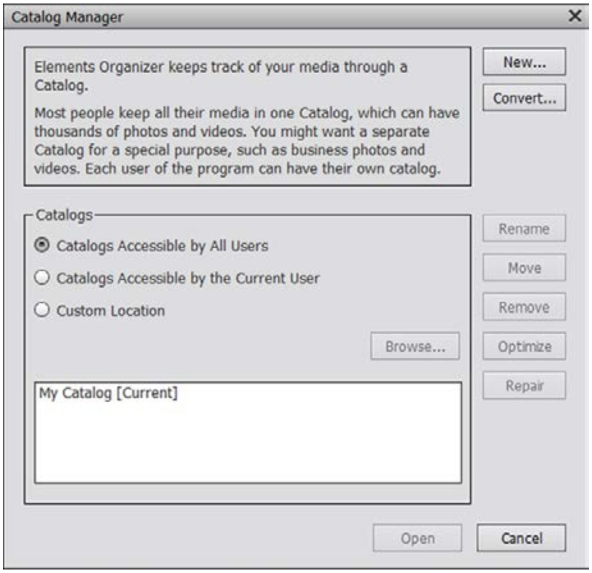
The Organizer is also the place we go to for quick fixes—Adobe calls these Instant Fixes—as well as a number of other creative activities, such as these:

- Making collages
- Calendars
- Greeting cards
- Quote graphics
- Slideshows

We also use the Organizer as a platform for uploading our creations to social media platforms such as Vimeo, Twitter, and YouTube.

The catalog

Elements refers to your image files using **links**—nothing is ever physically moved into the application. When files are imported, Elements makes links to where the images are kept (normally this is in the `Pictures` folder but it could also be other hard drives in the computer or external drives). This linking information, along with all the metadata, image thumbnails, tags, attributes, and keywords—in fact, everything you do with the program—is what is saved in the all-important **catalog**.



Elements Organizer keeps track of your media through a Catalog.

Most people keep all their media in one Catalog, which can have thousands of photos and videos. You might want a separate Catalog for a special purpose, such as business photos and videos. Each user of the program can have their own catalog.

Catalogs

● Catalogs Accessible by All Users
○ Catalogs Accessible by the Current User
○ Custom Location

My Catalog [Current]

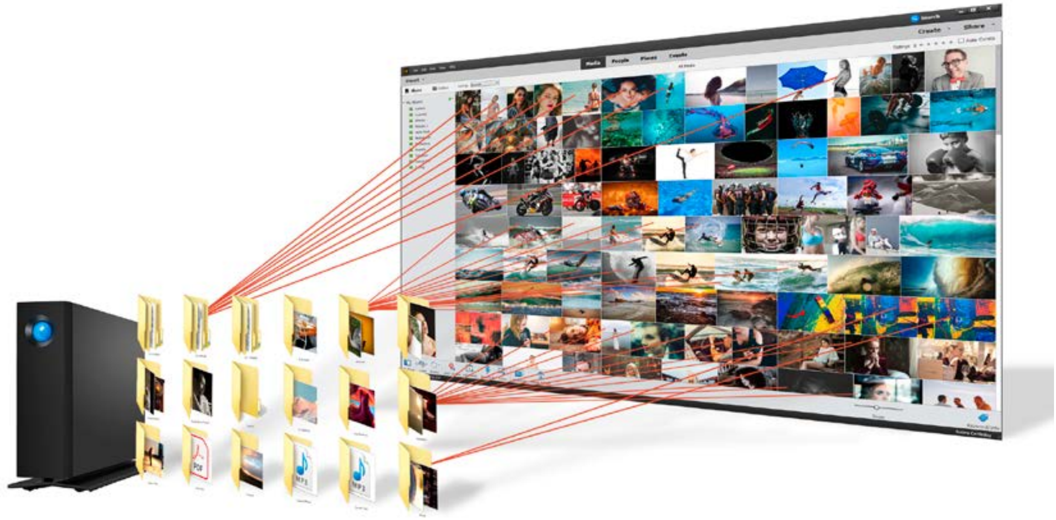
Occasionally, you will be reminded to 'back up' this catalog. If you have simply downloaded and installed Elements and proceeded to get on with your image organization and editing, you might not even know that there was a catalog, or what it does. It's important to back up this catalog on a drive that's separate to where Elements is running. An external hard drive is a good choice for this task.

The **Catalog Manager** (**Organizer>File>Manage Catalogs**) provides the ability to monitor one or multiple catalogs. To start, I'd recommend just having the one catalog. Having multiple catalogs is a good idea if you share Elements with your partner, your kids, or perhaps your work colleagues, but, because you can only ever open one catalog at a time, it makes sense just to start with one.

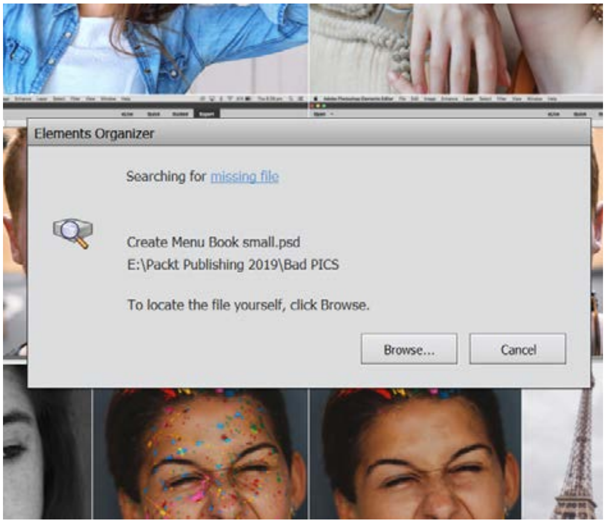
Though your original high-resolution files are not stored in the catalog, copies of the files are. Catalogs should be backed up periodically onto a separate hard drive—preferably one that doesn't contain your original image file. We'll cover this in detail in *Chapter 2*, *Setting Up Photoshop Elements from Scratch*.

Tip:

Before you run the program for the first time, note that when Adobe states that you 'import' assets into the Organizer, what it actually does is create links to your files wherever they might be stored. Nothing is physically moved or copied into the Organizer; instead, it's just linked to wherever the files have been stored. This is a good thing in case you ever have to reinstall the program because of a computer malfunction or hardware issue. But it can be bad if you habitually move or rename files using only the computer's finder system, and not through Elements itself. We will cover this in more detail later.



Links: As you can see from this illustration, 'importing' files is actually a process of 'linking' files—from their original location—to the Organizer window. If you delete, move, or rename any imported files it will break the link and you won't be able to edit them. If this happens, Elements should immediately search for the missing file based on the name it imported with the metadata. If it locates the lost file, it automatically re-links it. If not, then you can manually search for the lost files. (A single image will have multiple links if it appears in multiple Organizer albums.)



Elements Organizer

Searching for missing file

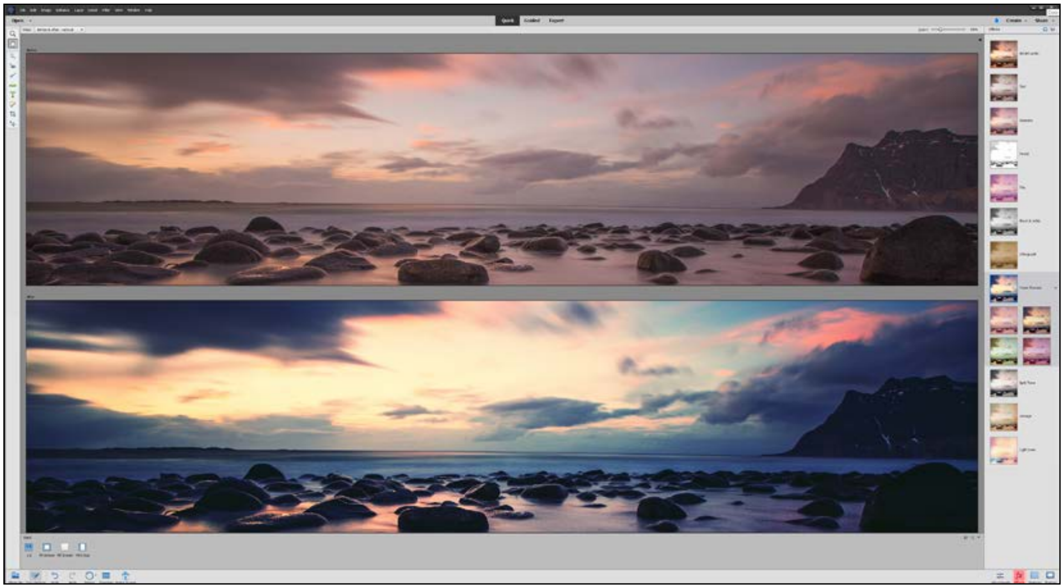
Create Menu Book small.psd
E:\Packt Publishing 2019\Bad PICS

To locate the file yourself, click Browse.

Lost an image? If, for whatever reason, you lose a few files—something that does happen from time to time—Elements can be sent in hot pursuit of the errant images. When files are imported into the application, although it never copies the actual image files, it does bring in data such as filenames, the metadata, and a thumbnail image—so Elements ***does*** know what that missing file looks like and what it's name is. In my experience, provided that the missing files have not been renamed or deleted, the software will eventually locate them for you (**Organizer>File>Reconnect All Missing Files**).

Photo Editor: the Quick edit mode

Adobe presents its editing features in three different windows or edit modes located in Photo Editor, which is a separate application from the Organizer. If you are a newcomer to Elements, I'd suggest starting with the simplest editing mode—this is the Quick Edit mode.

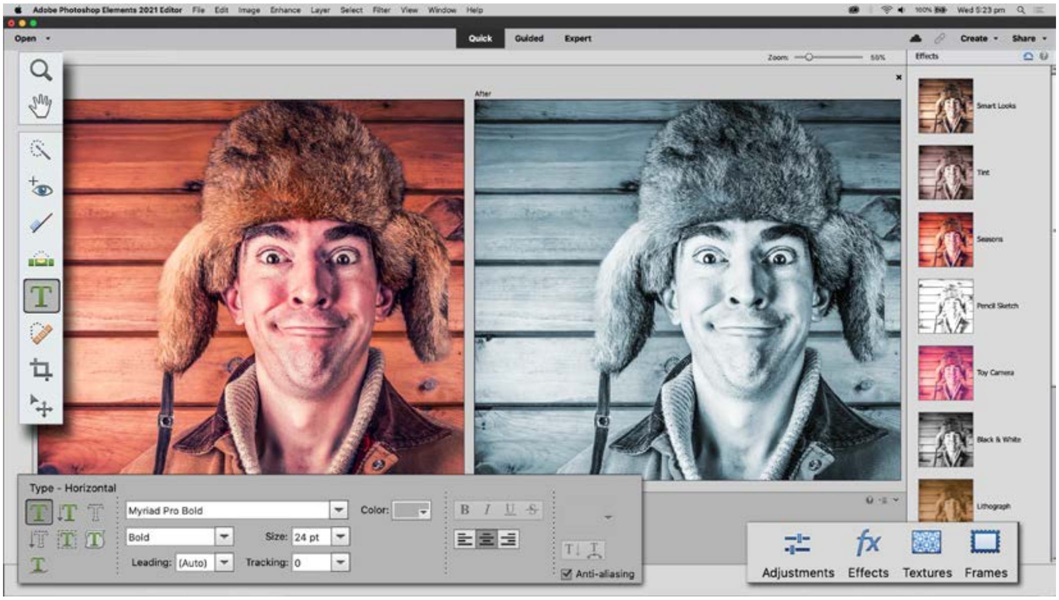


Quick Edit 'before' and 'after': As you can see here, in the Quick edit mode the image being edited can be displayed in different view formats: a before view, an after view, or, as seen here, the more useful before-and-after view mode. The right-hand side of the screenshot displays some of the excellent single-click effects available in this mode (accessed by clicking the **Effects** tab, highlighted in red at the bottom right). In fact, there are 55 to choose from (5 variants of 11 originals). This is a fantastic feature because just one click produces instant results, most of which serve as great inspiration for the creative mind. You might not like all of them, but they are a solid point from which to begin.

During the edit process, you'll use the Organizer to search for and find images that are then opened in one or, depending on your creative requirements, several of the three edit modes. After editing, they are saved and appear updated back in the Organizer. The process of getting images from the Organizer to the editor is dealt with in detail in *Chapter 3, The Basics of Image Editing*.

(Note that all three edit modes are interchangeable. This means that you can easily transfer an image from Quick, to Guided, to Expert, and back again, if needed.)

Quick edit mode enables users to make simple but significant improvements to any picture using a range of tonal adjustments. These are listed in a specific top-to-bottom order so as to produce the best editing workflow. Adjustments include **Smart Fix, Exposure, Lighting, Color,** and **Sharpness**.


Adobe Photoshop Elements 2021 Editor
File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
Select
Filter
View
Window
Help
Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
Zoom:
After
Effects
Smart Looks
Tint
Seasons
Pencil Sketch
Toy Camera
Black & White
Lithograph
Type - Horizontal
Anti-aliasing
Adjustments
Effects
Textures
Frames

Myriad Pro Bold
Bold
Size: 24 pt
Leading: (Auto)
Tracking: 0
Color:

This screenshot shows an enlarged view of the Quick edit mode's Toolbar (top left) as well as its tool **Options** panel (in this example it's set for the **Horizontal Type** tool) lower left, and its basic but highly effective **Effects** panel (accessed by pressing the **Effects** tab, (here enlarged from bottom right).

This mode's tools include the following:

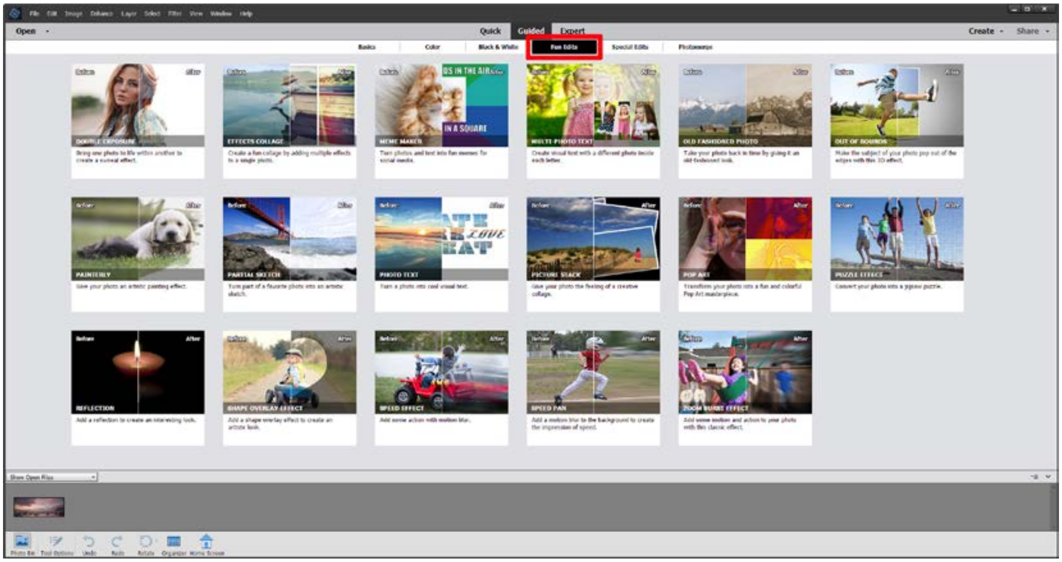
- **Zoom tool**—used for enlarging/reducing the size of images onscreen
- **Hand tool**—used for moving a greatly enlarged image around the screen
- **Quick Selection tool**—ideal for selecting/isolating specific parts of the image
- **Eye tool**—specializes in removing red-eye and (green) pet-eye
- **Whiten Teeth tool**—selects and brightens teeth in one easy action
- **Straighten tool**—an easy way to level wonky horizons
- **Type tool**—specifically designed for adding text to an image
- **Spot Healing and Healing Brush tools**—powerful tools for retouching photos
- **Crop tool**—a ubiquitous tool for cutting bits off your image to recompose the frame
- **Move tool**—the ideal tool for repositioning elements such as text

The performance of each tool, throughout all edit modes, can be modified using the **Tool Options** panel, which pops up from the bottom of the screen when clicked.

Photo Editor: the Guided edit mode

As the name suggests, the Guided edit workspace is packed with step-by-step instructions that guide you through a range of tasks—from tone fixes to far more complex processes such as panorama stitching and special type effects; there are 47 to be exact, presented in a beautifully designed and easy-to-use format. All you need to do is choose one of the effects and follow the step-by-step directions—easy!

Topics include **Basics, Color, Black & White, Fun Edits, Special Edits**, and **Photomerge** (a mini-application designed for stitching images together into widescreen panoramas, among other things).



DOUBLE EXPOSURE
Bring one photo to life within another to create a surreal effect.

EFFECTS COLLAGE
Create a fun collage by adding multiple effects to a single photo.

MEME MAKER
Turn photos and text into fun memes for social media.

MULTI-PHOTO TEXT
Create visual text with a different photo inside each letter.

OLD FASHIONED PHOTO
Take your photo back in time by giving it an old-fashioned look.

OUT OF BOUNDS
Make the subject of your photo pop out of the edges with this 3D effect.

PAINTERLY
Give your photo an artistic painting effect.

PARTIAL SKETCH
Turn part of a favorite photo into an artistic sketch.

PHOTO TEXT
Turn a photo into cool visual text.

PICTURE STACK
Give your photo the feeling of a creative collage.

POP ART
Transform your photo into a fun and colorful Pop Art masterpiece.

PUZZLE EFFECT
Convert your photo into a jigsaw puzzle.

REFLECTION
Add a reflection to create an interesting look.

SHAPE OVERLAY EFFECT
Add a shape overlay effect to create an artistic look.

SPEED EFFECT
Add some action with motion blur.

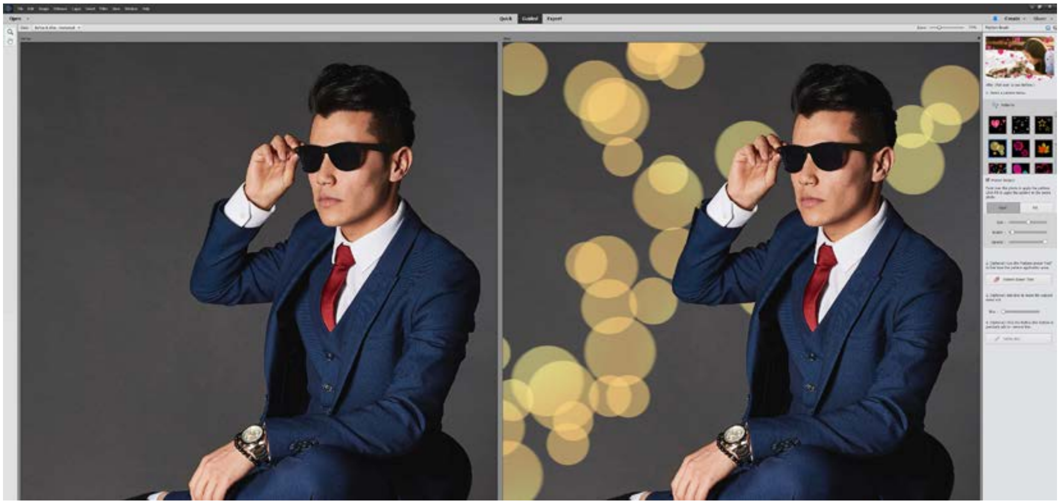
SPEED PAN
Add a motion blur to the background to create the impression of speed.

ZOOM BURST EFFECT
Add some motion and action to your photo with this classic effect.

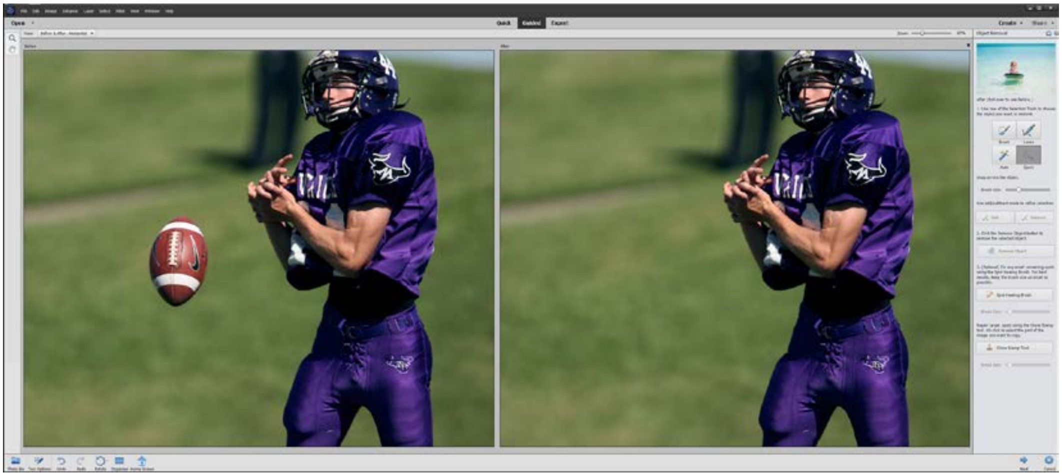
Guided Edit mode is a creative powerhouse: This screenshot demonstrates what the Guided Edit screen looks like (with the **Fun Edits** tab selected here in red). Note that while this screen is visually quite busy, its interactive design makes it quite clear what each of these effects looks like when applied to the samples pictured. I think this is a greatly underrated feature.

All you do is swipe the cursor left or right over each thumbnail to reveal the effect in a before/after style. This is good, practical software design that should find its way into a whole range of other software applications.

The Guided edit mode is a great source of creativity, more so perhaps than the current Home screen. For example, if you are a bit stuck with what direction to take your photo editing in, just open a picture in this mode and try some of the effects offered; most of them are bound to get your creative juices flowing nicely.



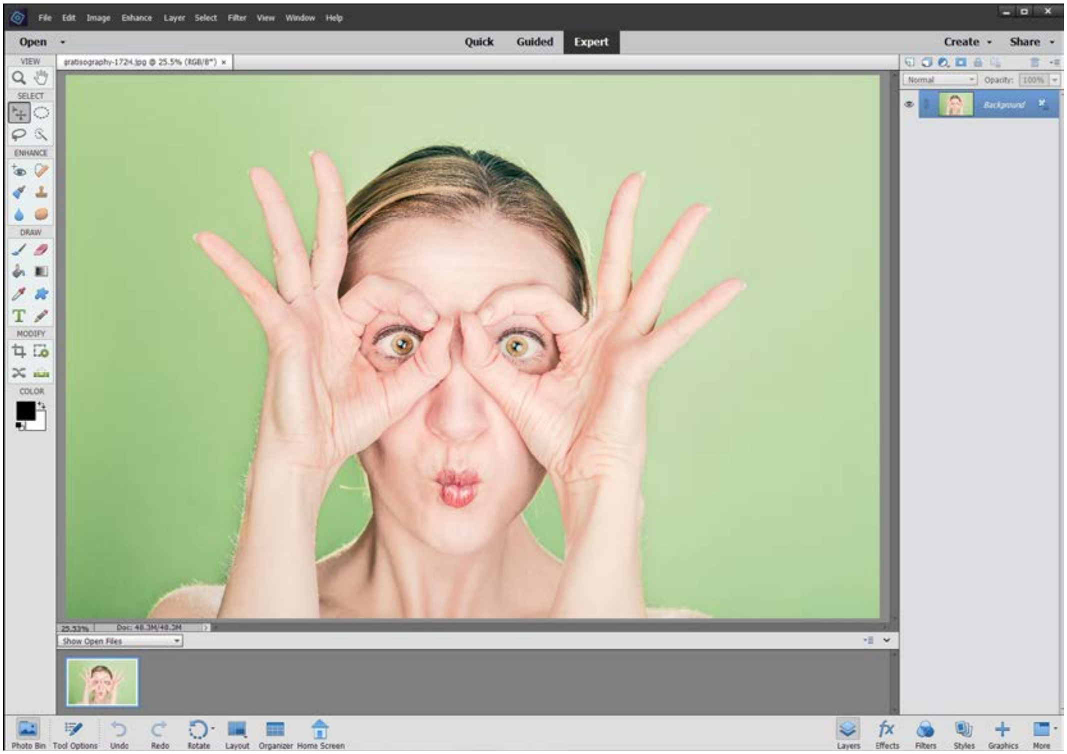
Pattern Stamp magic: It's hard to illustrate the Guided edit mode because it's packed with so many great features, so where do you start? However, the screenshot (above) of a suit-wearing man perfectly illustrates a feature new to Elements 2020 called Pattern Brush. Interestingly, there's been a **Pattern Stamp** tool in the far more sophisticated Photoshop CC for years but I always found it hard to use—however, this new version in Elements is both dead easy and highly effective.



Now you don't see it: Another **Guided Edit** introduced in the 2020 version of Elements is called **Object Removal** (find it under the Guided Edit **Basic** tab). As with many Guided processes, this tool combines a complex editing action involving selections and object cloning, with nothing more than a swish of the cursor. Brilliant! More on this feature in *Chapter 6*, *Advanced Techniques – Layers and Masking*.

Photo Editor: the Expert edit mode

Having played with the Quick and Guided edit modes, you might find this advanced editing workspace a little challenging, especially if you are a newcomer to photo editing.


File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
Select
Filter
View
Window
Help
Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
gratisography-1724.jpg @ 25.5% (RGB/8*)
VIEW
SELECT
ENHANCE
DRAW
MODIFY
COLOR
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Background
25.53%
Doc: 48.3M/48.3M
Show Open Files
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Layout
Organizer
Home Screen
Layers
Effects
Filters
Styles
Graphics
More

When using the Expert edit mode, it's a good idea to have an editing plan—a basic idea of what you'd like to achieve visually once the image is open in the main window. Some experience with the tools is also important—but you'll have picked up a lot of experience using these from experience gleaned with the previous two edit modes. In some ways, Expert mode resembles Adobe Photoshop—although I'd add that it also contains a lot of processes that you will not find in Photoshop. We will cover this in greater detail in *Chapter 5*, *Easy Creative Projects*.

Don't let the name put you off; its basic tools (dealt with in more depth in *Chapter 3*, *The Basics of Image Editing*) are easily mastered, providing you with a raft of powerful creative options.

Essentially, everything offered here is more customizable than in the Quick and Guided edit modes. Learning what everything does takes time and experience but, once you have played with some of the tools in the first two modes, moving into the Expert domain will be significantly easier

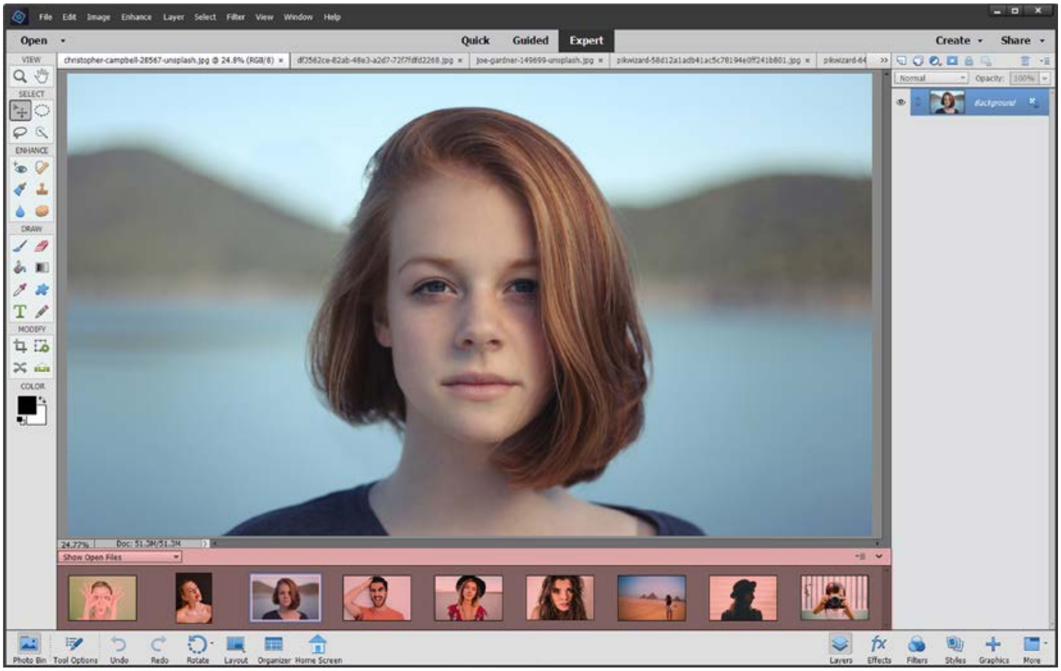

File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
Select
Filter
View
Window
Help
Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
VIEW
SELECT
ENHANCE
DRAW
MODIFY
COLOR
Normal
Opacity:
Background
Show Open Files
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Layout
Organizer
Home Screen
Layers
Effects
Filters
Styles
Graphics
More

Photo Bin: As with all the edit modes, the main window displays a Photo Bin (highlighted in pink), where currently open image files are stashed before being moved into the main edit space. There are also **Rotate** buttons, **Undo** and **Redo** buttons, and a **Tool Options** panel, which allows you to fine-tune the performance of every tool in the program—a very handy panel to familiarize yourself with because it allows you to finely control the efficacy of each tool—and therefore, hopefully, your results.

Once your images have been edited to perfection, you'll need to either incorporate them into a project, such as a slide show or photo book, export them to a printer, or upload them to your favorite social media site. This is where the **Create** and **Share** menus come in very handy. Let's take a look at what these menus offer.

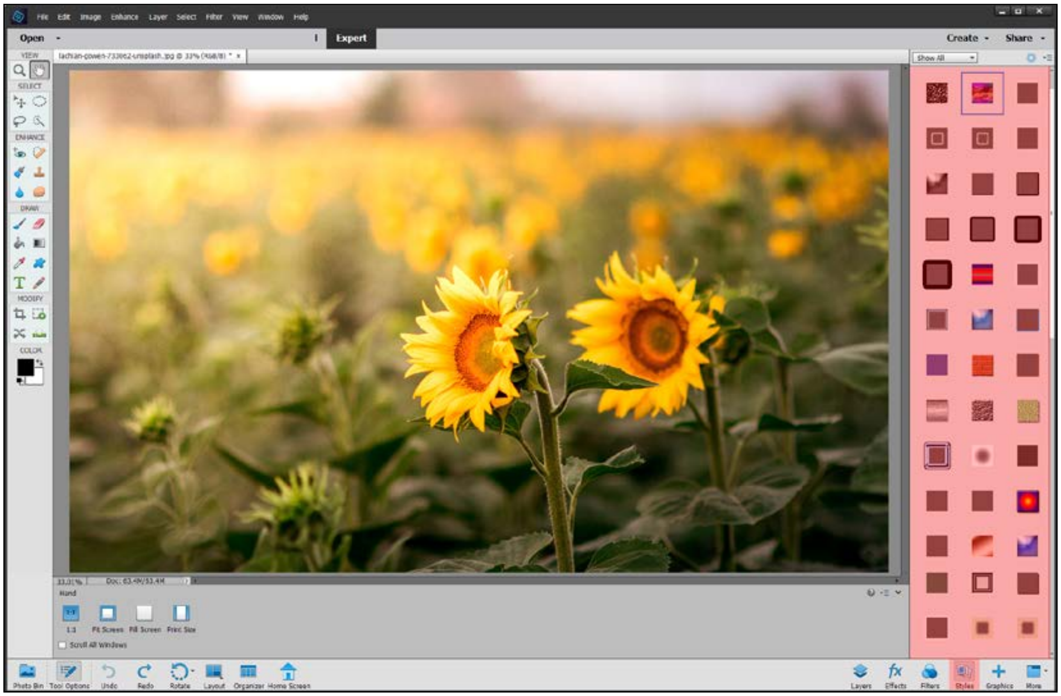
Tip:

When it comes to operating systems, don't worry about the age-old **Mac versus Windows** dilemma. After years of producing two quite different versions of this excellent software, Adobe finally settled its differences with Apple (over iPhoto). Now, the only difference between Elements running on the two operating systems comes down to the Command and Control keys, making life for those of us switching between Mac and Windows a breeze.

As to whether one box works better than the next one, that's a discussion I can leave to our familiar TV advertising rivals, on the left.

Working with panels and the Panel Bin

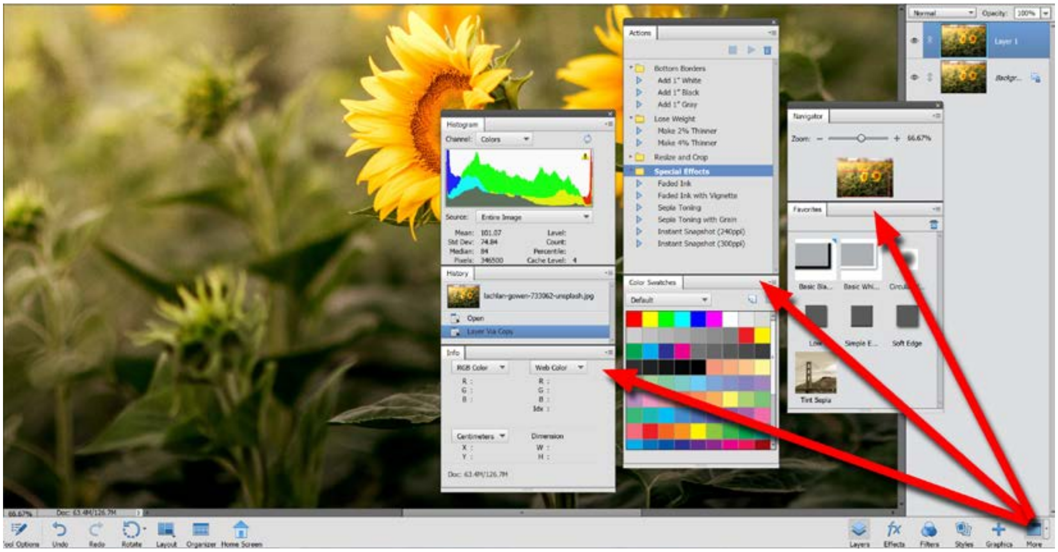
You'll find the most important panels in the Panel Bin, located on the right-hand side of the main screen in the Quick and Expert edit modes. While they might not be the most glamorous part of this application, panels still play an important part in your day-to-day workflow.


File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
Select
Filter
View
Window
Help
Open
Expert
Create
Share
Show All
VIEW
SELECT
ENHANCE
DRAW
MODIFY
COLOR
Hand
1:1
Fit Screen
Fill Screen
Print Size
Scroll All Windows
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Layout
Organizer
Home Screen
Layers
Effects
Filters
Styles
Graphics
More

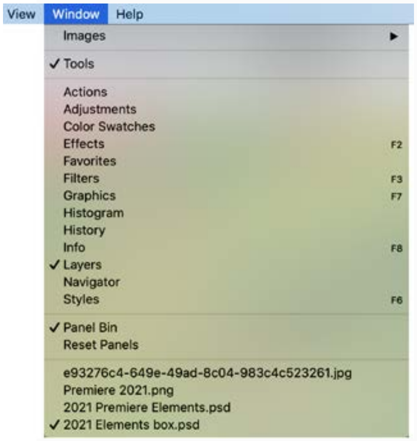
Using Styles, Drop Shadows, and more: Here I have highlighted the **Styles** panel in pink where, with a file open in the main window, a specific pre-recorded visual effects recipe can be applied—this could be anything from a color tweak to contrast, brightness, and sharpness adjustments. Even special effects can be applied to a file with a single mouse click.

The principal panels in the Quick edit mode are the **Adjustments** panel (*Chapter 3*, *The Basics of Image Editing*), **Effects**, **Textures**, and **Frames** (*Chapter 5*, *Easy Creative Projects*). The Expert edit mode has a wider selection of panels, including **Layers**, **Effects**, **Filters**, **Styles**, and **Graphics** (*Chapter 6*, *Advanced Techniques – Layers and Masking*).

There are more panels to be found in the Expert edit mode (**Actions**, **Color Swatches**, **Favourites**, **Filters**, **History**, **Histogram**, **Info**, and **Navigator**) accessed either by clicking on the **More** button (at the bottom and to the extreme right), or by using the **Window** drop-down menu (top of the page). Most panels have their own menus designed to organize the features each holds and, most importantly, to help you find the stuff you really need.


Histogram
History
Info
Actions
Color Swatches
Navigator
Favorites
Layers
Effects
Filters
Styles
Graphics
More

Detachable panels: This screenshot shows how you can physically drag panels off the right-hand side of the screen so they 'float' over the main screen area. Fine for those with large monitors; not so good for those working on a laptop.


View
Window
Help
Images
✓ Tools
Actions
Adjustments
Color Swatches
Effects F2
Favorites
Filters F3
Graphics F7
Histogram
History
Info F8
✓ Layers
Navigator
Styles F6
✓ Panel Bin
Reset Panels
e93276c4-649e-49ad-8c04-983c4c523261.jpg
Premiere 2021.png
2021 Premiere Elements.psd
✓ 2021 Elements box.psd

Tips:

- If you accidentally close a panel by clicking on the **x** icon at the top-right of the panel on Windows, or the top-left of the panel on a Mac, it's simple enough to reinstate that same panel from the **Window** drop-down menu.
- Some panels can also be reactivated using a keyboard shortcut, which is listed to the right hand side of all drop-down menus.
- Although panels 'live' in the Panel Bin, you can actually drag them out of the bin and arrange them so they 'float' over the work area by clicking, holding, and dragging the appropriate name tab to reposition it over the main edit window.

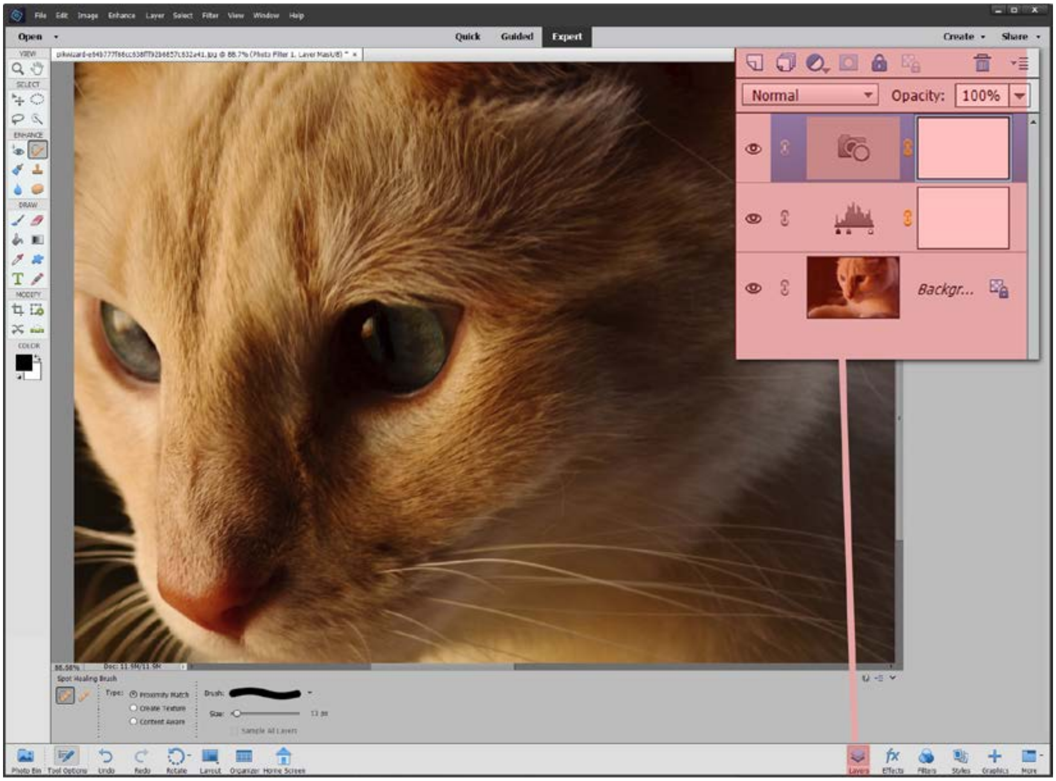
Panel Functions

Elements has many panels, each providing essential help with certain aspects of the editing process. Some refer to the Quick edit mode only (such as **Adjustments**), while others only appear in the Expert mode (such as the **Info** panel).

Here's an overview of what each panel offers:

- **Adjustments**: This provides sliders to adjust the **Exposure**, **Lighting (contrast)**, **Color**, **Balance**, and **Sharpness** settings.
- **Effects**: Provides the user with a great range of looks—automated effects recipes that can be applied to an image with a single click.
- **Textures**: Elements has a wide range of assets, such as surface textures, that, once clicked, are added to the file as an overlay. Good for backgrounds, web pages, and so on.
- **Frames**: Used mostly for graphic artwork. Click on an asset thumbnail in the panel and it downloads it from `www.adobe.com`, before automatically resizing and applying itself to the image. Clever stuff!
- **Filter**: The small thumbnails try to illustrate the effect of each FX filter. Click once on the thumbnail to apply the effect. Use the associated slider to vary the intensity of each effect. There are 98 different filters with millions of possible combinations.
- **Styles**: Single-click presets used to change an object, such as text, on its layer. Use **Styles** to add features such as drop shadows, bevels, glows, and patterns. Most are used for the purposes of design rather than to improve the image. This panel holds 176 different styles.
- **Actions**: An action is a small file of recorded instructions, an automated feature inherited from Photoshop. The supplied actions can be 'played' on images to achieve goals such as adding a border, resizing, and cropping. You can find more actions online. Download and import them into Elements to boost the paltry range supplied by default.
- **Graphics**: This panel contains a lot of (downloadable) assets: clip art, text effects, scalable vector shapes, and a huge range of picture frame styles—all of which can be applied through a single click. Because there are so many assets here, you can sort them according to **Type**, **Activity**, **Mood**, **Event**, and more **Graphics** contains over 1,000 assets listed—most have to be downloaded first before they are ready to use.
- **Color Swatches**: These are used to choose colors for a range of features, from type to pencil, to paintbrush to background colors. The panel allows you to make your own custom swatches for specific projects.
- **Favorites**: This is a big time-saver; you can keep your frequently used styles and graphics in one place by dragging the relevant thumbnail into the **Favorites** panel.
- **Histogram**: This displays the range of tones present in any image and, more accurately, where in the brightness range those tones sit (such as mid-tone, highlights, whites, blacks, underexposed, and overexposed).
- **History:** A useful panel that displays your editing steps—from opening an image to saving the new work. Click on any of the steps displayed to go back to a previous edit state, mouse click by mouse click. This is handy if you decide that you have edited the image a bit too much; just click back a few steps to a previous version.

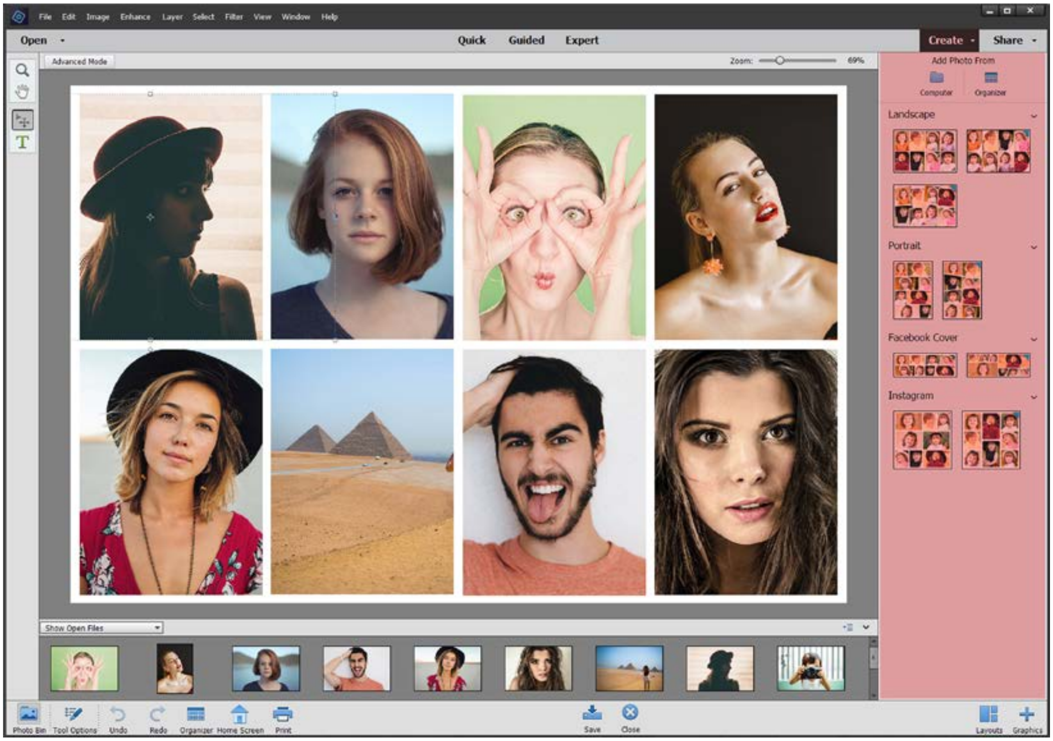
- **Navigator**: This is another unsung hero of this program. The **Navigator** panel displays the image you have open in the main window. This is especially useful when the main window display is enlarged so that it is bigger than the screen, because it's then hard to know which part of the image you are seeing.
- **Info**: This is a useful panel that displays the RGB brightness values in any part of the image that you mouse over. The readout works regardless of the tool currently being used.
- **Layers**: Possibly the most important panel for advanced projects where text, and multiple objects are added to a document, on separate layers, thus maintaining full editability throughout the production process.



The **Layers** panel is one of the most useful panels because it enables you to manage text, selections, images, and vector objects all in one (multi-layered) file. To preserve editability at every stage, layered files must be kept separate and saved in either the Photoshop file format (`.psd`) or in the Tiff file format (`.tif`). The panel shows the original image layer (called **Background** by default), a **Levels Adjustment** layer in the middle of the stack, and a **Photo Filter** (**FX**) adjustment layer on top. The white rectangles are layer masks—their white state indicates that they are transparent and are therefore not affecting the image.

The Create and Share menus

When digital photography became mainstream 20 years ago, there were precious few things you could do with your images other than looking at them on low-resolution screens—digital printing was in its infancy, as were reliable computers, the internet, and editing software. It took programs such as Photoshop Elements to introduce us to the concept of doing something more than just looking at images on a screen. It began with a few creative projects and is now driving a huge range of activities, ranging from book printing to slideshows, scrapbooking, and custom stationery.


File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
Select
Filter
View
Window
Help
Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
Advanced Mode
Zoom:
69%
Add Photo From
Computer
Organizer
Landscape
Portrait
Facebook Cover
Instagram
Show Open Files
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Organizer
Home Screen
Print
Save
Close
Layouts
Graphics

Effective automation: Creative projects are an excellent way to execute relatively complex actions with ease. In the screenshot here, all I did to complete this layout was find eight different photos, open them, then choose **Photo Collage** from the **Create** menu. The application automatically arranged the files according to the layout chosen in the right-hand panel and it's done. A time-consuming process performed automatically here in less than a minute—genius!

Running through both the Organizer and all three edit modes, you'll spot the highly useful **Create** and **Share** menus. The Organizer is used as a media browser for still images, music files, and video clips, so it's designed to work with both Elements and its consumer video editing sibling, Premiere Elements. In it, you'll find a few additional features offered, in both the **Create** and **Share** menus, notably for producing video projects and uploading them to video-centric sites such as YouTube and Vimeo.

Some of its original projects provide the user with great creative options—for example, anything from making a slideshow, photo collage, photo book, greeting card, or calendar, to producing your own instant movie, DVD labels, and photo prints. As indicated, its **Share** menu just provides you with the easy option of uploading your newly crafted work directly to Facebook, Twitter, email, Vimeo, YouTube, or the desktop.

It's possible to buy Photoshop Elements as a standalone photo editor but, as is often the case, it's also sold bundled with its moving-picture sibling, Adobe Premiere Elements, simply because the line between still images and video has become increasingly blurred (no pun intended).

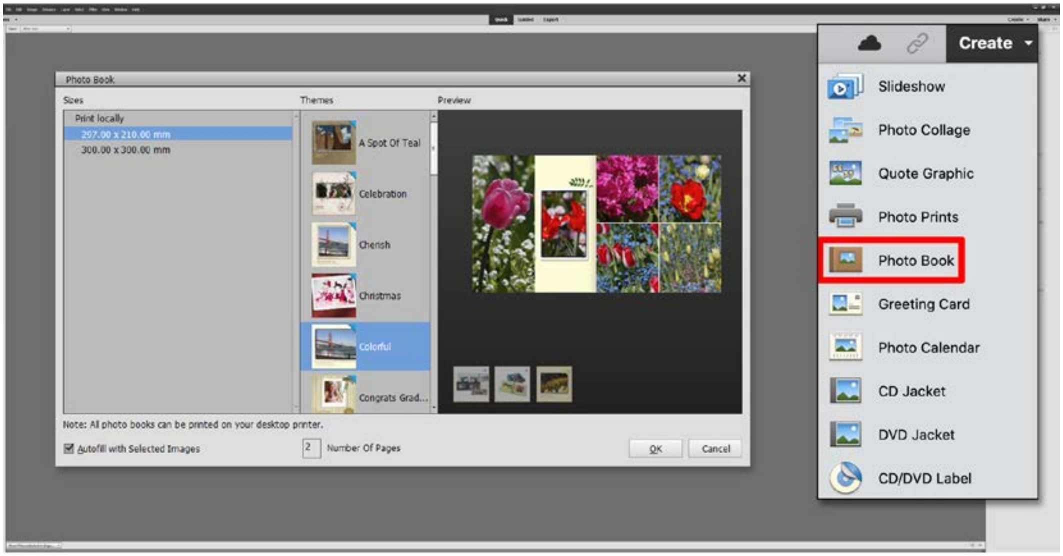
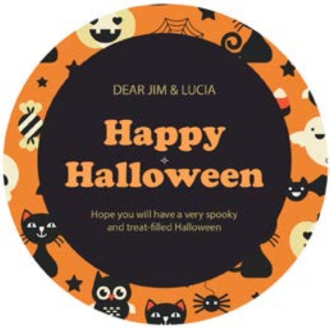


Photo Book
Sizes
Print locally
297.00 x 210.00 mm
300.00 x 300.00 mm
Themes
A Spot Of Teal
Celebration
Cherish
Christmas
Colorful
Congrats Grad...
Preview
Note: All photo books can be printed on your desktop printer.
Autofill with Selected Images
2
Number Of Pages
OK
Cancel
Create
Slideshow
Photo Collage
Quote Graphic
Photo Prints
Photo Book
Greeting Card
Photo Calendar
CD Jacket
DVD Jacket
CD/DVD Label

Create menu features: Use the **Create** menu to start a range of cool creative projects—such as making a **photo book**. Choose the theme, size, and number of pages, then drag and drop your pictures into the frames, add text, and upload for printing.

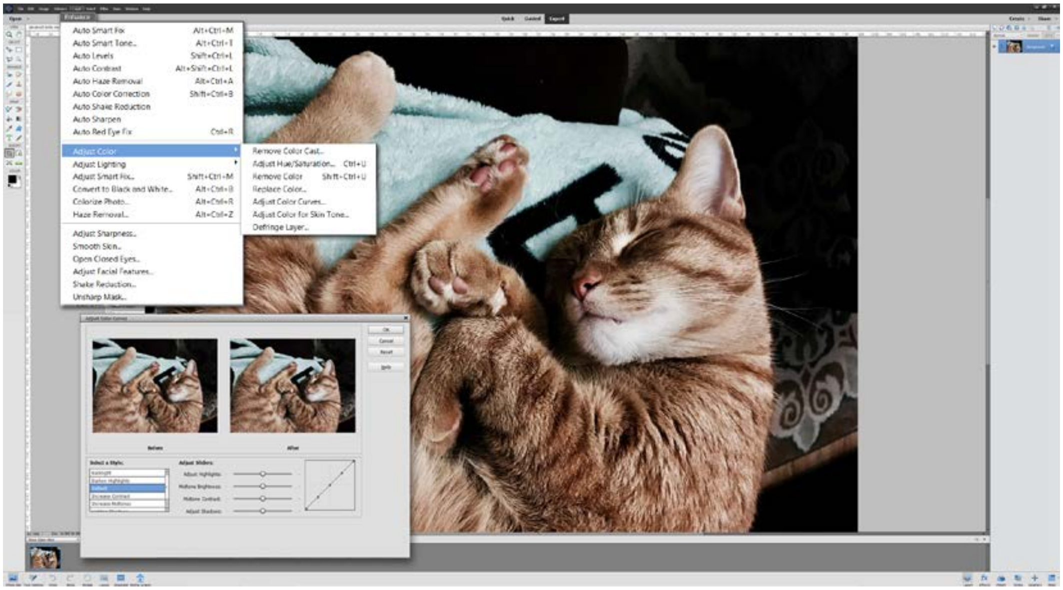
Otherwise, these two drop-down menus are identical, enabling users, after the editing is done, to incorporate them into one of the many creative projects offered, and then to share them immediately, directly out of Elements, with a range of social media platforms or local destinations such as the desktop. Interestingly, you'll also find a new feature lurking in this menu—it's called **Quote Graphics** (there's an example to the right) and is designed, as the name might suggest, to make it easy for you to add text—quotes or simple prose—into images or into one of the many supplied graphics. Like many features in this application, **Quote Graphics** makes the often frustrating process of working with the Type tool a lot easier and more fun.

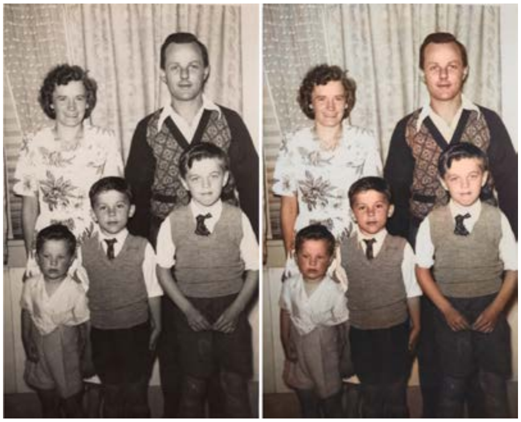

DEAR JIM & LUCIA
Happy Halloween
Hope you will have a very spooky and treat-filled Halloween

Enhance menu

Aside from the panels and easy-to-use single click effects available scattered about the Elements edit modes, the application is also bristling with drop-down menus. These provide the basics—such as commands for a new document (**File>New Document**), opening an existing document (**File>Open**), and closing a document (**File>Close**), pretty much as you'd expect to find in other photo editing applications. We deal with these menus in later chapters, as well as at the back of the book in the Feature Appendix.

I regard the Enhance menu as the most creative of all the menus—this is where you'll find many of Elements' excellent tools, both automated and manual.


Enhance
Auto Smart Fix Alt+Ctrl+M
Auto Smart Tone... Alt+Ctrl+T
Auto Levels Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Contrast Alt+Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Haze Removal Alt+Ctrl+A
Auto Color Correction Shift+Ctrl+B
Auto Shake Reduction
Auto Sharpen
Auto Red Eye Fix Ctrl+R
Adjust Color
Adjust Lighting
Adjust Smart Fix... Shift+Ctrl+M
Convert to Black and White... Alt+Ctrl+B
Colorize Photo... Alt+Ctrl+R
Haze Removal... Alt+Ctrl+Z
Adjust Sharpness...
Smooth Skin...
Open Closed Eyes...
Adjust Facial Features...
Shake Reduction...
Unsharp Mask...
Remove Color Cast...
Adjust Hue/Saturation... Ctrl+U
Remove Color Shift+Ctrl+U
Replace Color...
Adjust Color Curves...
Adjust Color for Skin Tone...
Defringe Layer...



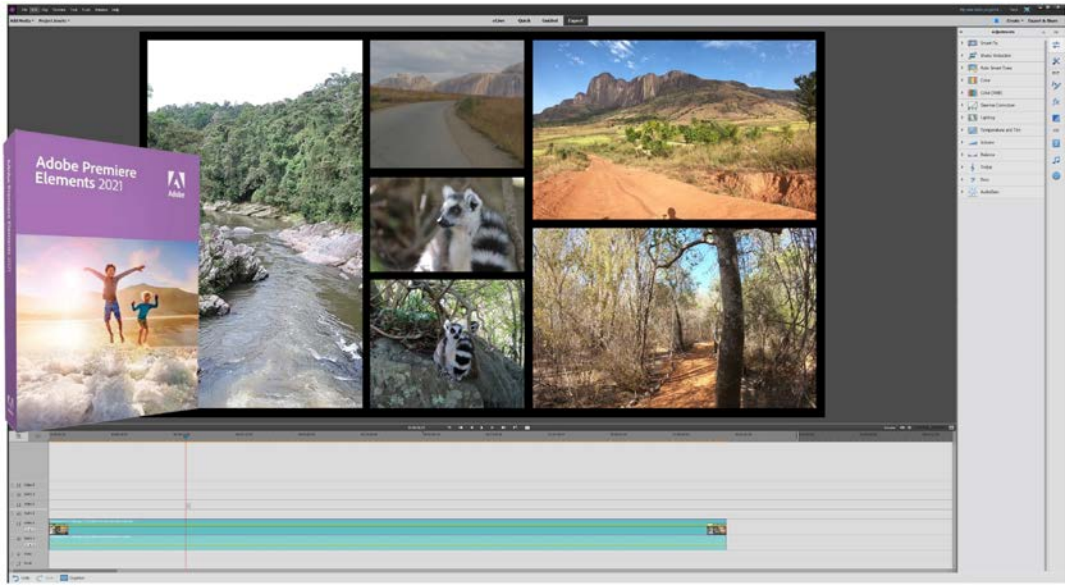
Try everything in the Enhance menu: One of the lesser-known tools, **Color Curves** is a good color correction tool inherited, in a modified form, from Adobe Photoshop CC (See *Chapter 7*, *Additional Tools and Features* for more on this tool).

Another impressive AI-driven feature, **Colorize Photo**, is one of my all-time favourites because it works so well on a wide range of image types.

Enhance is stacked with good stuff for the serious image editor. It has 30 fantastic features—most of which are easy to use and produce outstanding results with little or no need for much previous experience.

Working with video and Premiere Elements

Adobe Premiere Elements targets the consumer video-editing market and, increasingly so, these two applications are often sold as a bundle, which incidentally should save you 25% or more compared to buying the two applications separately.

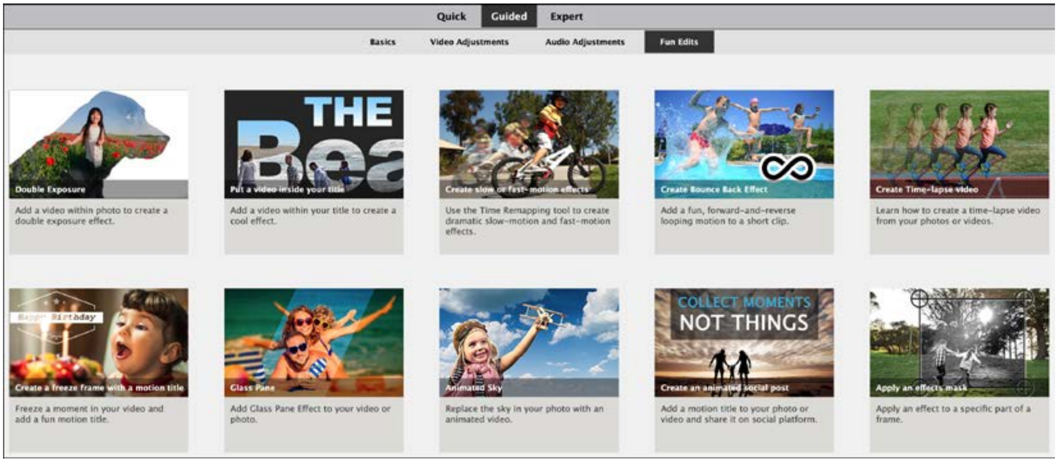


Video timeline: As with most video editors, Premiere Elements features a non-linear timeline along which your clips are arranged. You can do this manually—or leave it to one of its auto video functions. It comes with a wide range of manual and automated features—many of which might look more familiar in a top-of-the range professional application. Another very handy feature is its automated Quick Movie function—just find a few clips and the application edits them into a video in a matter of a few minutes!

We can use the Organizer to catalog still images, as well as HD video clips, GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format files used to record short animations), audio tracks, and music, together or separately, depending on the work planned. Once organized, files can then be opened in either application—Elements Photo Editor or Premiere Elements—depending on how they are to be used. I edit quite a lot of video, so I find this close relationship incredibly convenient, especially where I might need to use still images in a video project or video clips in a still image story that's, for example, to be exported to Facebook or Vimeo. And as you'll see in Elements 2021, some of the new features, such as Moving Photos, are designed to use still images but export the animation as a `.gif` file.

To the novice, Premiere Elements might seem unduly complex. Being a video-editing application, it does deal with images and time in a single process, but this application is very much like Photo Editor: you can skim through it using the automated video tools, or explore its many professional standard editing features to produce a movie of outstanding quality.

The relationship between Premiere Elements and Adobe Premiere Pro, Adobe's high-end editing suite, is similar to that between Elements and Photoshop CC. It began as a simpler version of the high-end commercial product, but it's now one of the best video editors on the market.



Double Exposure
Add a video within photo to create a double exposure effect.

Put a video inside your title
Add a video within your title to create a cool effect.

Create slow or fast-motion effects
Use the Time Remapping tool to create dramatic slow-motion and fast-motion effects.

Create Bounce Back Effect
Add a fun, forward-and-reverse looping motion to a short clip.

Create Time-lapse video
Learn how to create a time-lapse video from your photos or videos.

Create a freeze frame with a motion title
Freeze a moment in your video and add a fun motion title.

Glass Pane
Add Glass Pane Effect to your video or photo.

Animated Sky
Replace the sky in your photo with an animated video.

Create an animated social post
Add a motion title to your photo or video and share it on social platform.

Apply an effects mask
Apply an effect to a specific part of a frame.

Like Photoshop Elements, Premiere Elements also has **Quick**, **Guided** and **Expert** Modes. Guided Edit mode has all you need to take you step-by-step through the video-editing process, significantly speeding up the process of movie making.

Additionally, like Elements, Premiere employs some incredibly powerful features that include image stabilization; an amazing instant movie feature; a wide range of professional effect looks (a look is a prerecorded editing recipe designed to add a specific color, tone, or emotion to a video clip—they are great time-savers); sophisticated brightness, contrast, color, and sharpness tools; and an export function that allows you to easily upload any completed video project to social media effortlessly. The new version boasts some truly innovative AI-driven features, such as auto subject selection and tracking, video double-exposure, and animated matte overlays—features that, till now, were only ever found in high-end professional software.

If you are considering moving into video production, this is a very capable and professional tool with a great range of guided and automated functions that makes the often tedious job of editing video clips a breeze.

Summary

In this chapter, we have learned about the different parts that make up the Photoshop Elements image-editing application. We now understand that this package not only offers a comprehensive suite of powerful editing tools, but its Organizer, running as a separate application to the editing module, can be used to catalog all our assets in one place: as stills, music, clips, and HD videos. Then, depending on the level of editing required and your experience, it's relatively simple to achieve quite complex edits using any of the semi-automated processes seen in the Quick Edit mode.

That said, we now know that it's also possible to take far greater control by exploring the Expert Edit mode in greater depth. The next chapter highlights the best way to set up a powerful editing computer, how to import images into the Organizer, how to work with Organizer catalog backups, and how to get your media into a cohesive order using Albums, Tags, Metadata, Keywords, Attributes, and its powerful search facility.

2

Setting Up Photoshop Elements from Scratch

If you are new to Photoshop Elements, then this is the chapter for you. Here we'll be looking at how to set up your camera, computer, monitor, data storage, and media backup—all of which are vitally important steps toward developing the perfect editing workflow. Getting your setup correct from the outset will enable you to plunge straight into the learning process without having to waste time renaming files or folders, go looking for lost images, or worse, lose materials because it never occurred to you to back up your original files in a timely fashion.

This chapter also discusses how to import your media, how to back it up safely, plus how to start sorting through the thousands of images in your collection using a terrific range of organizational tools such as keyword Tags, Star ratings, Events, People, and Places (GPS).

And even if you are not new to Elements, take some time here to check that your camera settings, screen calibration, photo import, and backup workflow are optimized. You never know, this might save you a lot of grief later on.

What you'll learn in this chapter:

- Setting up a photo editing computer
- Importing media into the Organizer
- Reviewing Media
- Media Backup
- Star rating your photos
- Search for pictures using metadata
- Organizing your work: Keyword tags
- Organizing your work: Places
- Organizing your work: Events
- Organizing your work: People
- File formats: JPEG and RAW
- File format characteristics
- Managing Catalogs
- Using plug-ins
- Color spaces
- Color management
- Screen and printer calibration

Setting up a photo editing computer

Although we take computers much for granted these days, using such a machine to store, process, and edit high-resolution stills and video data requires a totally different set of features compared to a machine that's only used for web browsing, social media, emailing, or downloading music.

Although the compatibility of Windows and Mac computers used to be very minimal, their operating systems are now far more user-friendly, both in the way third-party hardware interacts (such as external drives) and in that most software is now shared between the two systems.

Operating system wars: Is there really a difference between running Elements on a **Windows** or **Mac** computer? The answer to this question can get you into a lot of hot water, depending on the technical leaning of the person being asked. I have used Windows and Mac desktops and laptops for a long time and find that, when editing images, there's really no big difference in performance between the two operating systems. In the early years, Elements was a different application on a Mac because Adobe was in contention with Apple over **iPhoto** (being the default image browser), but that's all sorted now. Macs are certainly beautifully designed, but provided that you have the same processing power, RAM chips, graphics card, and screen resolution set, you'd be hard-pushed to pick out any real performance difference. However, you will experience a significant **cost difference** between the two platforms. Macs have always sold at a premium compared to Windows gear.

An imaging computer needs to have a very fast processor (the **central processing unit (CPU)**). This is the bit that does all the calculations. A computer with one of the latest CPU chips installed will certainly future-proof your investment for several years to come. That said, I don't advise you to purchase the very latest technology, simply because you'll pay an absolute premium for it without necessarily gaining a commensurate speed advantage. Such is the downside of being an early adopter.

It's better to buy something that is just about to be replaced—which means it might only be five months old—and spend the cash saved on installing additional memory (also called random access memory or RAM). The more memory installed, the more images, video clips, and applications you can have running at the same time without the computer visibly struggling. I'd recommend at least 16 GB of RAM to start with, and more if you can afford it.

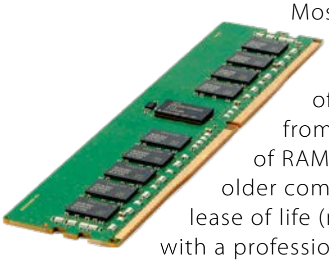
Currently, screen resolutions are impressively high, with 4K (3,840 x 2,160 pixels) and now 5K (5,120 x 2,880 pixels) curved and flat screens becoming the norm. A flat screen is best for your imaging needs. Curved screens certainly appear tempting but, because of their shape, will never give accurate feedback when trying to adjust characteristics like proportion and perspective. The size of the screen you have is also partially dictated by the capability of the computer's graphics card. That said, most pre-installed graphics cards are powerful and easily capable of running a very high-resolution 4K or 5K screen, and in many models, even two screens at the same time.

ColorNavigator 7
ColorEdge CG279X
Monitor settings
Tools
Preferences...
Color mode
User STD
BT.2020 STD
BT.709 STD
DCI STD
PQ_DCI STD
PQ_BT.2100 STD
HLG_BT.2100 STD
Adobe RGB STD
sRGB STD
CAL ADV
Adobe RGB_00000002
Calibrate
Details...

Brightness 120 cd/m²
White point D65
Gamma 2.20
Gamut Adobe RGB
Gamut Clipping Off

Adjustment date 2018-07-13 08:42
When the monitor is used for 198 hour(s), adjustment will be executed.

Monitor quality: The best image editing computer monitors are made by **Eizo**—these have superb edge-to-edge brightness, are easily (color-) calibrated, come with a hood, and produce reliable, accurate color. They are expensive, so are only practical if you plan on running a business. If you want to save some money, look at buying a monitor from Dell, Ben-Q, or even LG, three companies that produce pretty good display products that are considerably more affordable.



Most computers sold off the shelf contain the minimum amount of RAM to keep the cost down. For maximum performance, it pays to top up the RAM, either at the point of purchase, or later, where you might save money buying it from the local computer shop or online. Increasing the amount of RAM significantly improves computer performance—even in an older computer it can be hugely beneficial—almost giving it a new lease of life (note that not all Mac models can be upgraded so check with a professional first).

If it's an entry-level video card not suited to a high-resolution output, you might encounter a lot of onscreen flickering, which can be quite disturbing. Check carefully before you buy.

SAMSUNG
Portable SSD T5

Small but sweet - SSD drives: For absolute speed freaks, **solid state drives (SSDs)** are the best option – both as an internal drive in your Windows or Mac, and also as an external option. Expensive and not as high in capacity as their older SATA drive companions, SSDs are small, light, require no additional power, and are incredibly fast.

Then there is the very real problem of storage. Most photographers are prolific shooters and, with consumer camera resolutions generally passing the 25 megapixel mark at present, it won't take long to fill the computer's hard drive with media.

My advice is always to use a desktop computer, Windows or Mac, because, though large and bulky, they are significantly cheaper than laptops.

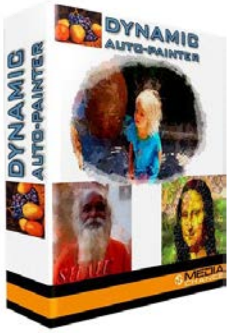
WD
My Book
Duo
drobo

Removable desktop hard drives: The device on the left is a single hard drive unit from LaCie (the company has a unique Porsche-style design for its products). A single drive, such as this 6 TB model, would suit most beginners. The Western Digital My Book Duo, shown in the middle, is a RAID drive containing two hard drive units in the one box. This offers a mirroring feature, where it backs up two copies of everything, or it can be programmed for extreme speed if this is needed. The unit on the right is by a company called Drobo—this is another RAID storage-style drive suited for heavy users. Drobo claim its drives are significantly smarter than standard RAID drives (RAID technology has been around for more than two decades), providing sophisticated backup for professional image makers and small businesses. The idea behind this type of system is that it is integral to your workflow and can grow with your requirements. A device such as this is a must if you are starting your own imaging business.

Apart from that, their size (notably for Windows PCs) permits the addition of further internal hard drives when more storage is needed and even the upgrading of internal components such as video cards and motherboards for improved performance. Mac desktop computers are a little harder to upgrade internally partly because of their design, and partly because, if you do, you might void your warranty.

Desktop hard drives are the perfect way to keep up to date with backups – they are relatively inexpensive for the capacity offered, and if one fills up, it's easy enough to buy another. There are a number of excellent devices currently available from Seagate, LaCie, and Western Digital, to name a few.

Best practice is to install just your operating system and software applications onto the computer's hard drive. Everything else – photos, music, and video – is saved to an external hard drive, or drives. That way, your computer can run at its optimum, while accessing your photo library on an external drive. Once that external drive is full, it's simple enough to carry on with a second, or even a third, external hard drive.



Other software: I appreciate suggesting "other" photo editing software is not a politically correct thing to do in a book written around Photoshop Elements. But in fact there are many other software apps on the market that can do certain things, such as HDR (high dynamic range image making), far, far better than Elements. To give you an idea, three products come to mind that will extend your image making capabilities significantly:

HDR - **Aurora HDR** Professional (by Skylum)

Painterly effects - **Dynamic Auto Painter** (by Mediachance)

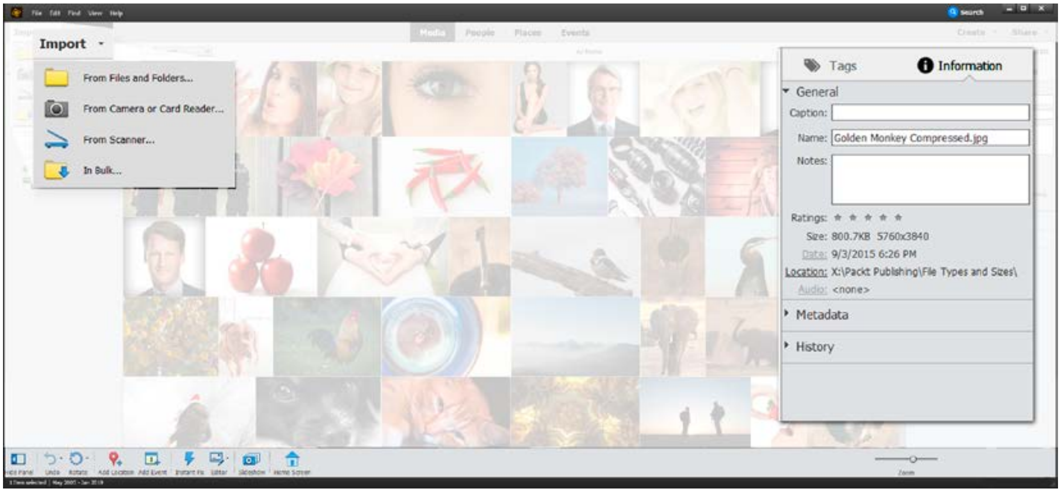
Best plug-in range - **JixPix**

Laptop issues: If you absolutely have to use a laptop (and a lot of photographers are entirely mobile these days), this is also a good option, although its storage space, computing power (CPU), and screen size will all be compromised unless you spend a lot of money. One answer is to buy several external storage drives and a large desktop screen that can be hooked up to the laptop when you are working locally in the home office.

Laptops are designed to be lightweight and compact, so there's never much storage space in them for all your files. Typically, we would buy a portable USB-powered hard drive for backups while traveling. Once home, it might make better sense to transfer all your work from the USB-powered hard drive to a physically larger desktop drive—these are usually cheaper, have a far greater data capacity, and are (mostly) more reliable.

Importing media into the Elements Organizer

As mentioned in *Chapter 1*, *Photoshop Elements General Features Overview*, when images are imported into the Elements Organizer, they are not physically copied into the application; they are just linked from the place where they are stored (typically, this is the `Pictures` folder) to the Organizer. Should Elements or your computer develop a technical issue and you have to delete and reinstall the application, you just need to reinstate the catalog from the backup version, and it automatically re-links all files. Sometimes, it's necessary to actually point the program to the hard drive where the images are stored, but as often as not, Elements will search and find every image that was previously linked in the catalog. It's a clever program.



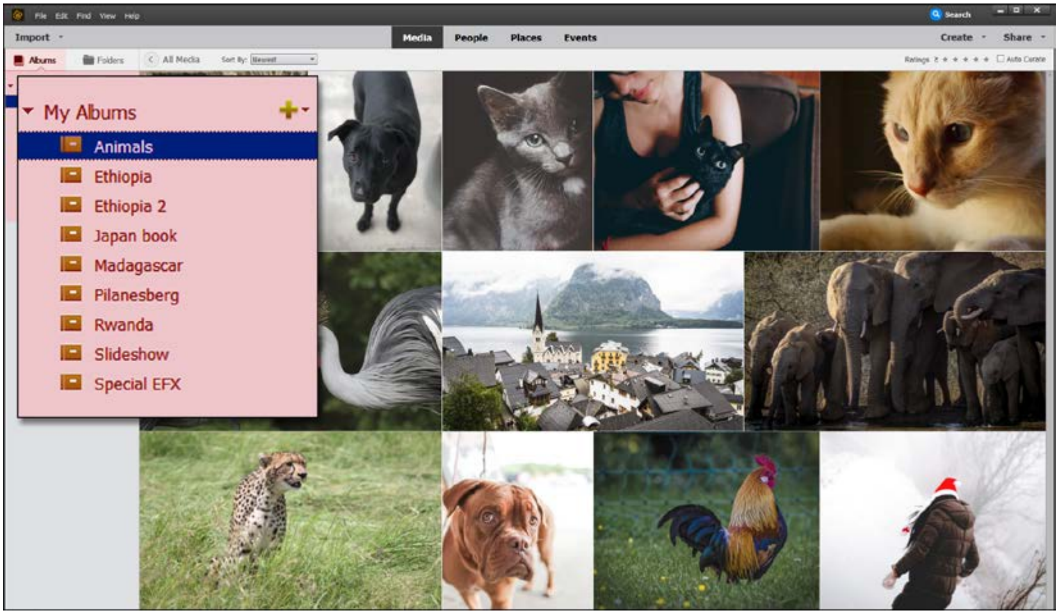
Caption:
Name: Golden Monkey Compressed.jpg
Notes:
Ratings: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Size: 800.7KB 5760x3840
Date: 9/3/2015 6:26 PM
Location: X:\Packt Publishing\File Types and Sizes\
Audio: <none>

Import: Using the **Import** button (on the top left-hand side in the Organizer), you can bring images, audio, or video clips into the Elements Organizer directly using the **From Files and Folders** option. These files can physically reside anywhere – locally, on the computer, or externally on a drive. There are also options to import files directly from a camera or a card reader, or in bulk from pre-organized folders. The panel on the right-hand side of the main window holds both keyword and metadata information about each file. Click the small **Keyword/Info** button on the lower right-hand side of the main screen to open/close this panel.

Because of this linking process, it's not advisable to rename or move files that have already been imported into Elements. If files are moved or renamed using the Windows Explorer or Mac's Finder, the next time Elements starts, it will prompt you that the file is missing and immediately start a search for the file. This is fine if the name remains the same, but if it has a new name, it will have to be re-imported. You can leave Elements to complete the search, or do it yourself, if you know where the file was moved to. How long Elements takes to locate a moved file depends on how big your photo collection is.

The import process is fast because Elements only copies thumbnails and the metadata (essentially text) when it forms a link to the original files. So, to avoid wasting time searching for files that have been renamed or moved after they were imported into the Organizer, it makes sense to sort out the storage hierarchy on the computer or external drives before importing to the application.

We all have different ways with which to organize our busy photographic lives. Some prefer to store files by date, others prefer to name everything according to events in their lives. There's no right or wrong way to do this. The best method is the one that you are going to remember.


File
Edit
Find
View
Help
Search
Import
Media
People
Places
Events
Create
Share
Albums
Folders
All Media
Sort By: Newest
Ratings
Auto Curate
My Albums
Animals
Ethiopia
Ethiopia 2
Japan book
Madagascar
Pilanesberg
Rwanda
Slideshow
Special EFX

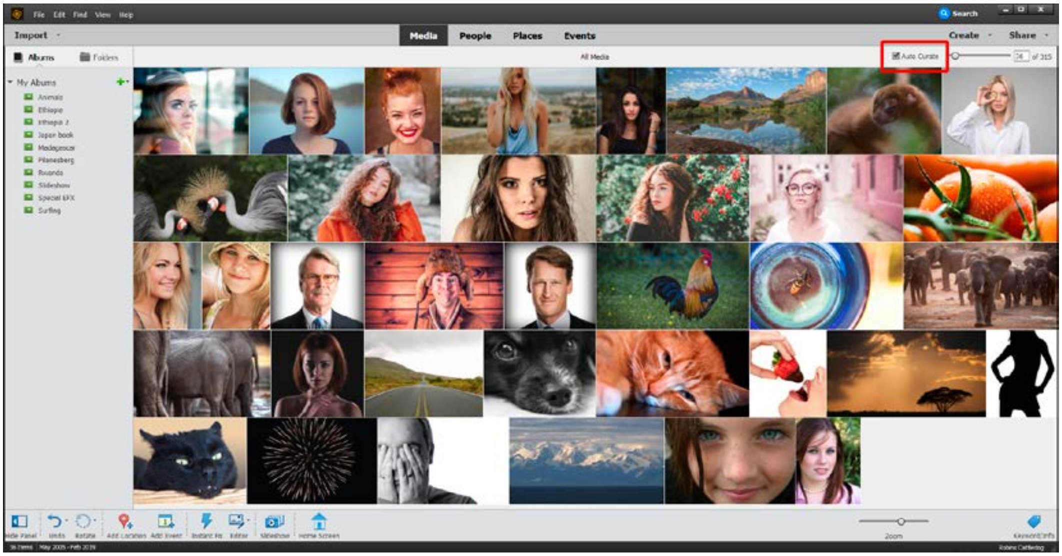
Making albums: In this screenshot, I have created an album called **Animals**. Selecting the album on the left-hand side of the window will display the contents of that album in the main window. As with most features in Elements, an album can be renamed at any time. The huge advantage of creating albums, apart from enabling you to easily compartmentalize your work into smaller, more practical collections, is that you can have the same image or images in multiple albums without increasing the space taken up on the storage drive.

Tip:

Before you import a second batch of images, it makes sense to sort out the first batch, because if you continue to import folder after folder of images, before long, you'll have thousands displayed in the main screen, and that can get very confusing. Once imported into the Organizer, you can see exactly where on your hard drives those imported files reside through the **Folders** menu in the left-hand bin.

That said, there are basic rules I can suggest that will make the editing process flow better:

- Download and organize your files into pre-made folders as often as you can. If you download on a regular basis, it will help you keep abreast of the Elements imports and will also ensure that you don't accidentally overwrite files on a camera memory card.
- Always add keyword tags to freshly imported files. The longer you leave organizing your work, the more confusing it gets.
- Divide your images into events—these might be "work", "trips", "family", "weekends away", and so on. Create an album for each big trip, an album for a conference, an album for the kid's birthdays, and so on. These are essentially virtual folders that are used for compartmentalizing image files inside Photoshop Elements. Dragging image thumbnails to populate these albums doesn't alter the location of the originals.
- Use keywords, tags, and star ratings to help you sort images into a sense of order that you can work with (I particularly like ranking images according to keywords and the star attribute hierarchy because they are easy to do).


File
Edit
Find
View
Help
Search
Import
Media
People
Places
Events
Create
Share
Albums
Folders
All Media
Auto Curate
of 315
My Albums
Animals
Ethiopia
Ethiopia 2
Japan book
Madagascar
Pilanesberg
Rwanda
Slideshow
Special EFX
Surfing
Hide Panel
Undo
Rotate
Add Location
Add Event
Instant Fix
Editor
Slideshow
Home Screen
Zoom
Keyword/Info

Auto Curate: Photoshop Elements has a number of quite powerful but often overlooked features – including this one, called **Auto Curate**, highlighted here in red, which picks the top 500 images from the Organizer. The results might surprise you. With your media displayed in the main window, check the **Auto Curate** box and watch as Elements finds 50 of the best images from anything up to 20,000 images (according to Adobe). As I think most of the images in my test media are good anyway, it's a mystery how it finds 50 (or any number you choose) of the best. Nonetheless, this is worth a look for a quick, frustration-free selection.

- Give everything a proper name once it is edited
- As new images appear in the Organizer, they show up in the main window as thumbnails. Make the thumbnails bigger/smaller using the zoom slider at the bottom right-hand side of the screen. Use the edge-of-screen sliders to scroll down the page to see more thumbnails, or just use the *up/down* keyboard arrows.
- All the details of this filing system (albums, tags, keywords, thumbnails, original files, and so on) are part of the Elements catalog, which is something that needs backing up to a location different to where the original files are stored.

Some photographers prefer to divide image collections into multiple catalogs. For example, wedding photographers might have a separate catalog for each client. For most of us, one catalog is enough because you can only open one catalog at a time anyway.

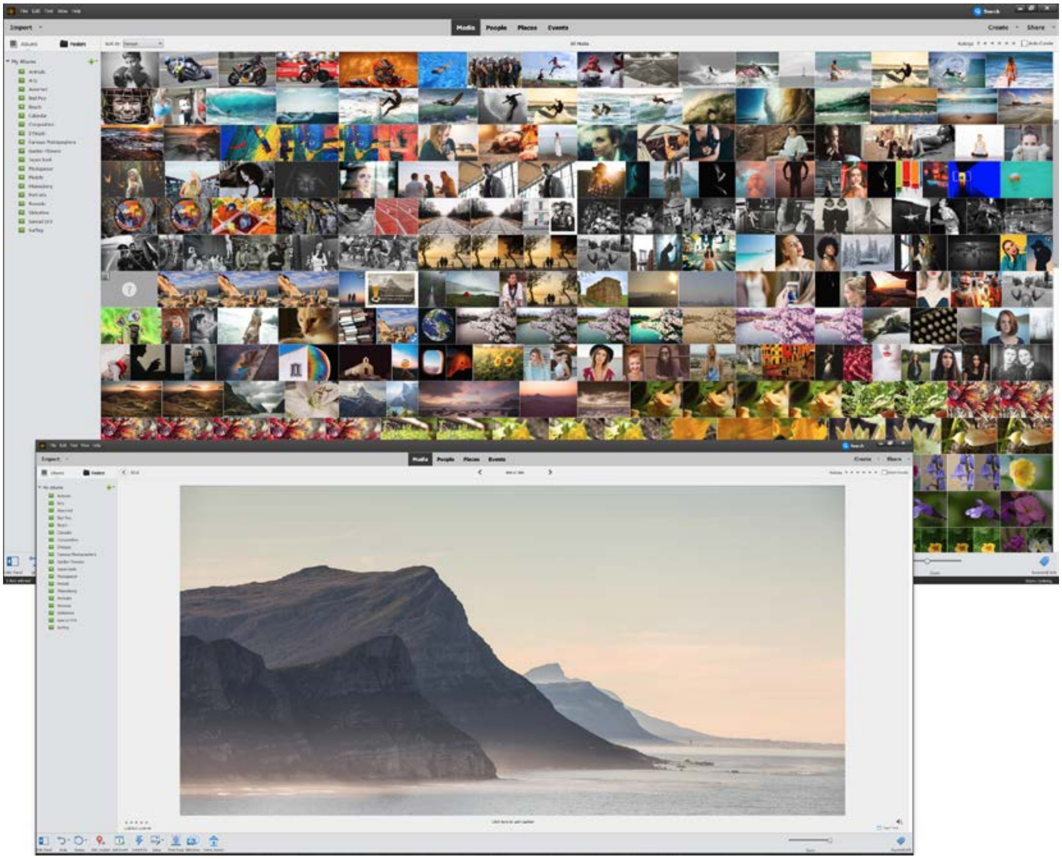
Nearly all DSLRs and mirrorless cameras use the JPEG and RAW file formats. Most of the cheaper point-and-shoot type cameras only use JPEGs. That said, JPEGs can be opened and read by a very wide range of applications—photo software and even Microsoft Word and PowerPoint. RAW files are far less universal and require a specific software to work. In Elements this is called Camera RAW. As each new camera model produces an entirely new type of RAW file, Elements has to be updated reasonably regularly so it can keep up to date with all the new stuff coming on to the market. If you have just bought a new camera, don't be surprised if Elements cannot read its RAW files. You might have to wait till the next Adobe Camera RAW update before the application can open them. In the interim, you can always use the software that came with the camera to open RAW files or download the free Adobe DNG file format converter, convert your RAW files to the DNG format and edit from those till the new software is ready.

Nikon
D610
Adobe
DNG

Reviewing the media

Looking at your media in the Organizer couldn't be easier. The main window displays all media files in a mode called **Grid View**—these are adjustable-size thumbnails. But note that if you create and populate albums, the main window will only display the contents of each album.

Compartmentalizing a photo collection into multiple albums, therefore, is an effective way to break up what would otherwise be a confusing mass of files populating (or flooding) the main screen into smaller, more visually digestible quantities.



Adjustable thumbnails: One tip for anyone wanting to sort through a lot of images is to maximize the thumbnail size so the screen effectively only displays one image at a time, as seen in this coastal seascape, then use the *up/down* arrows on the keyboard to scroll through the latest import while examining each file full size. Every time you find an image that you want to keep or think needs editing, you can classify it using the number keys to add one, two, three, four, or five stars (see the *Organizing your work – ratings* section later in this chapter). Use these to sort and search for images. (Pressing the number zero on the keypad removes all star attributes.) You can also see that once expanded to full screen, you can also type in a caption for the displayed image and play any associated sound (that is, if it's a movie clip). Even better, there are no restrictions as to how many albums you can create and, since they are essentially virtual folders, they don't take up much storage space.

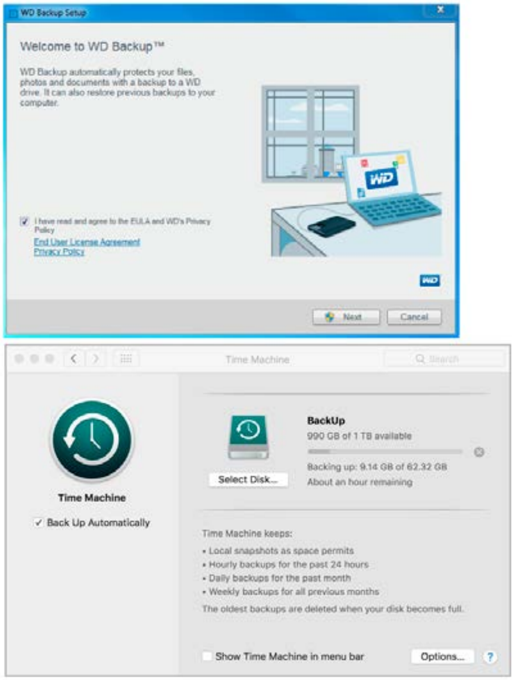
Media backup

As we expand our image and media collection, we'll not only need large capacity hard drives, but also data **backups**. It's important to perform backups in case the original drive corrupts, or suffers a mechanical failure. Nothing is forever and even though the drive might be a premium brand, things can still go wrong, usually when you least expect it.

There's no point in backing up images, or your Elements Catalog, to the place where the originals are also stored—typically your computer's hard drive. If it becomes corrupted, everything is lost. Consider a large-capacity hard drive that is used only for backing up your data: images, music, Elements' Catalog, and so on. Most PCs have room for additional internal drives. If you use a Mac, you'd be best to buy an external hard drive.

If you are using a Mac, backing up your data is easy using a pre-installed Apple application called **Time Machine**. Windows users also have it easy because most quality external drives (such as Seagate and Western Digital) come with automated backup software included.

This software takes only a few moments to set up. Once done, you can forget it, because it automatically backs all your new material up every hour, day, or week (depending on how you initially set up its preferences). Another viable option is to back up to the cloud. In many ways this is the most secure option as those companies spend an awful lot more on **data security** than any individual photographer! Some cloud storage companies worth a look include Dropbox, Backblaze, Google Drive, Apple, Box, and Microsoft OneDrive.



WD Backup Setup

Welcome to WD Backup™

WD Backup automatically protects your files, photos and documents with a backup to a WD drive. It can also restore previous backups to your computer.

☑ I have read and agree to the EULA and WD's Privacy Policy

End User License Agreement
Privacy Policy

Time Machine

Time Machine

✓ Back Up Automatically

BackUp
990 GB of 1 TB available
Backing up: 9.14 GB of 62.32 GB
About an hour remaining

Time Machine keeps:
- Local snapshots as space permits
- Hourly backups for the past 24 hours
- Daily backups for the past month
- Weekly backups for all previous months

The oldest backups are deleted when your disk becomes full.

☐ Show Time Machine in menu bar

Above: Here's a standard desktop hard drive with a massive 8 TB storage capacity, of the type easily purchased online or from most good computer stores. It's perfect for all your media backup requirements.

Top left: For most of us the purchase of a desktop hard drive is the perfect solution for media backup. Devices are not expensive, come in a wide range of models and storage capacities, and if you fill one with your image files, it's easy enough to buy more to add to the library.

Left: The two screenshots here show **Western Digital's** free backup software (available for Mac and Windows) on the left, and Apple's excellent **Time Machine** software utility, which comes pre-loaded on every Mac, on the right.

Star rating photos

Some of you might be familiar with the Windows operating system's star ratings. This is a feature that allows you to award a file from one to five stars, depending on their merit. You can then search for files (in this context, images) that are displaying *X* number of stars.

You might give your best images five stars, and those that need editing three stars – that kind of thing. Ratings appear in a wide range of photo editing applications, including Adobe Bridge, Lightroom, and CameraBits' Photo Mechanic, for good reason—it's a system that's easy to implement and effective in its organizational potential. Here's how to get this happening:

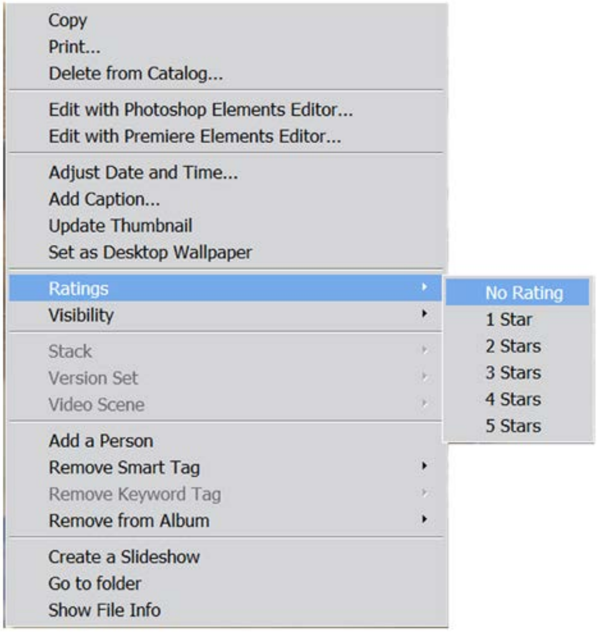
Step one: Right-click an image in the **Organizer.**

Step two: From **Ratings** in the contextual menu, slide over the number of stars you'd like to award that image (from 1-5). Or select one or more images in the main window, and hit any number key between *1* and *5* (use the top of the keyboard not the number keypad) to add a rating.

Step three: To search for an already-rated image, click the appropriate star symbol in the **Ratings** search field (top of the screen just under the **Create** tab), and everything in the main screen with that star rating remains. All else is hidden until you click the same star rating again to zero the search.

Note that this search can be refined by clicking the tiny symbol to the right of the word **Ratings** to set **Greater than, or equal to**, or **Less than, or equal to**, or **Rating is equal to**. It can make a big difference to your search results. This is an exceptionally intuitive system that's easy to set up, easy to modify, and very efficient in its search results—just use that pop-out menu to lower, raise, or delete the rating if required.

Contextual menu help: While sorting through recently imported images, get into the habit of right-clicking a thumbnail. This reveals a contextual menu that offers many options, but in particular reference to sorting images, you can choose from any of the following: **Delete from Catalog, Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor, Edit with Premiere Elements Editor, Adjust Date** (good for when you cross different time zones), **Add Caption, Add a Rating** (1-5 stars), **Add a Person** (identified in the image for later searches), **Create a Slideshow** (when more than one image thumbnail is selected), and **Show File Info** (that is view the file's metadata). All good stuff.

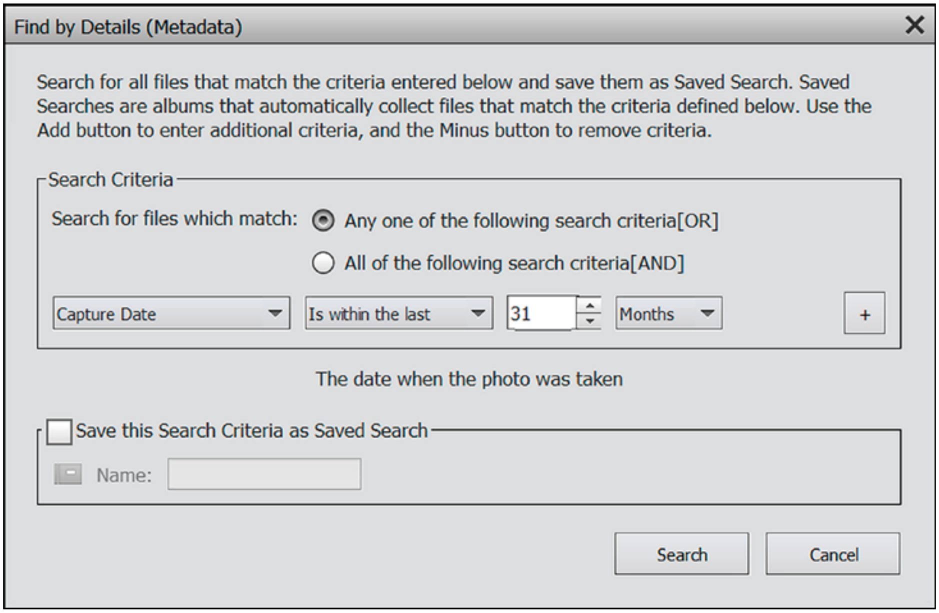

Copy
Print...
Delete from Catalog...
Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor...
Edit with Premiere Elements Editor...
Adjust Date and Time...
Add Caption...
Update Thumbnail
Set as Desktop Wallpaper
Ratings
Visibility
Stack
Version Set
Video Scene
Add a Person
Remove Smart Tag
Remove Keyword Tag
Remove from Album
Create a Slideshow
Go to folder
Show File Info
No Rating
1 Star
2 Stars
3 Stars
4 Stars
5 Stars

Searching for pictures using Metadata

Metadata is little more than a small text file that records all your camera details at the time a photo is taken. We rarely read the metadata unless we specifically look for it or, in this context, use it to search for images. Metadata records camera and lens details, date, time, size, resolution, filename, and if your camera has the feature, a set of GPS coordinates.

The advantage of metadata is that the information already exists, so we can use **Organizer** to search our image database using any of those pre-recorded metadata details for a fast result.

You might consider that the **Find by Details (Metadata)** search field looks a bit confusing because it offers so many ways to search for images. You can also use this dialog box to save frequently used searches—a real time-saver. It can also be used to search for images by the date and time captured (This is especially useful if you holiday in different time zones).



Find by Details (Metadata)

Search for all files that match the criteria entered below and save them as Saved Search. Saved Searches are albums that automatically collect files that match the criteria defined below. Use the Add button to enter additional criteria, and the Minus button to remove criteria.

Search Criteria

Search for files which match: ● Any one of the following search criteria[OR]

○ All of the following search criteria[AND]

Capture Date | Is within the last | 31 | Months

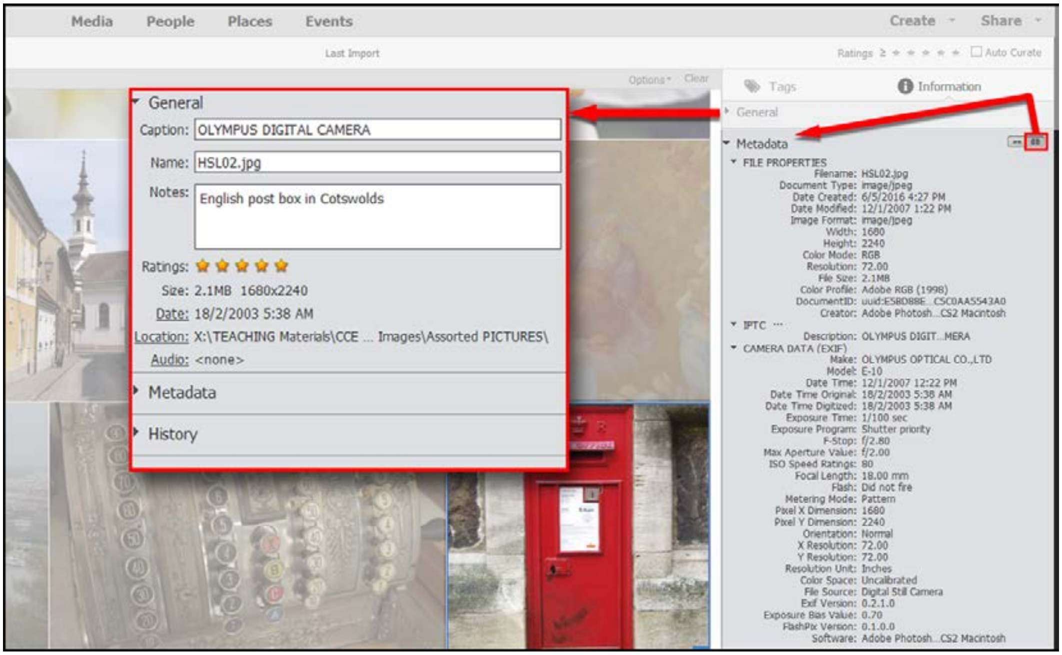
The date when the photo was taken

☐ Save this Search Criteria as Saved Search

Name:

Metadata search: By selecting **Find**>**By Details (Metadata)**, you see this screen. By default it opens with **Search for files which match any of the following search criteria** (by capture date—which you choose using the drop-down menu). This is a very wide type of search but as you'll discover, you can click that left-hand menu to see 36 other search options. As I write a lot about camera technique, I often search for specific things such as aperture (f-stop), ISO setting, focal length, and White Balance, which makes the task of trawling through hundreds of potential image files a breeze.

Another criterion I use a lot is to search for **camera type**, or the **date taken**—but if you are more interested in searching for people, for example, you can also access all of Elements' other methods of search, including **People tags**, **Event tags**, and of *course*, keywords. If what you find in the menu is not specific enough, add a second or a third 'search rule' by clicking the **+** button that sits to the right of the **Search Criteria** window.



General

Caption: OLYMPUS DIGITAL CAMERA

Name: HSL02.jpg

Notes: English post box in Cotswolds

Ratings: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Size: 2.1MB 1680x2240

Date: 18/2/2003 5:38 AM

Location: X:\TEACHING Materials\CCE ... Images\Assorted PICTURES\

Audio: <none>

Metadata

History

Metadata

FILE PROPERTIES

Filename: HSL02.jpg
Document Type: image/jpeg
Date Created: 6/5/2016 4:27 PM
Date Modified: 12/1/2007 1:22 PM
Image Format: image/jpeg
Width: 1680
Height: 2240
Color Mode: RGB
Resolution: 72.00
File Size: 2.1MB
Color Profile: Adobe RGB (1998)
DocumentID: uuid:E5BD88E...C5C0AA5543A0
Creator: Adobe Photosh...CS2 Macintosh

IPTC ···

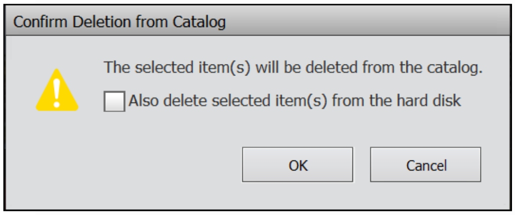
Description: OLYMPUS DIGIT...MERA

CAMERA DATA (EXIF)

Make: OLYMPUS OPTICAL CO.,LTD
Model: E-10
Date Time: 12/1/2007 12:22 PM
Date Time Original: 18/2/2003 5:38 AM
Date Time Digitized: 18/2/2003 5:38 AM
Exposure Time: 1/100 sec
Exposure Program: Shutter priority
F-Stop: f/2.80
Max Aperture Value: f/2.00
ISO Speed Ratings: 80
Focal Length: 18.00 mm
Flash: Did not fire
Metering Mode: Pattern
Pixel X Dimension: 1680
Pixel Y Dimension: 2240
Orientation: Normal
X Resolution: 72.00
Y Resolution: 72.00
Resolution Unit: Inches
Color Space: Uncalibrated
File Source: Digital Still Camera
Exif Version: 0.2.1.0
Exposure Bias Value: 0.70
FlashPix Version: 0.1.0.0
Software: Adobe Photosh...CS2 Macintosh

Quick information: The **Information** panel shown here shares space in the right-hand panel with **Tags**, and is quite comprehensive—there's a compact version and an extended version (seen here, currently occupying the entire right-hand panel).

Above that is the **General** menu (for the purposes of this illustration, it's floating over the thumbnail picture grid, to the left of the extended **Information** panel). This displays a few snippets of that file's metadata, as well as the star rating and where it physically resides on your hard drives. Interestingly, the information displayed here is somewhat truncated when compared to the full search capabilities displayed through the **Find** menu—but nevertheless, it's a good place to start your search.



Confirm Deletion from Catalog

The selected item(s) will be deleted from the catalog.

☐ Also delete selected item(s) from the hard disk

Tip:

Right-clicking any thumbnail and choosing **Delete from Catalog** brings up a dialog window asking if you also want to physically delete the original file from wherever it might be stored. This is handy if you think it really needs to go!

Tip:

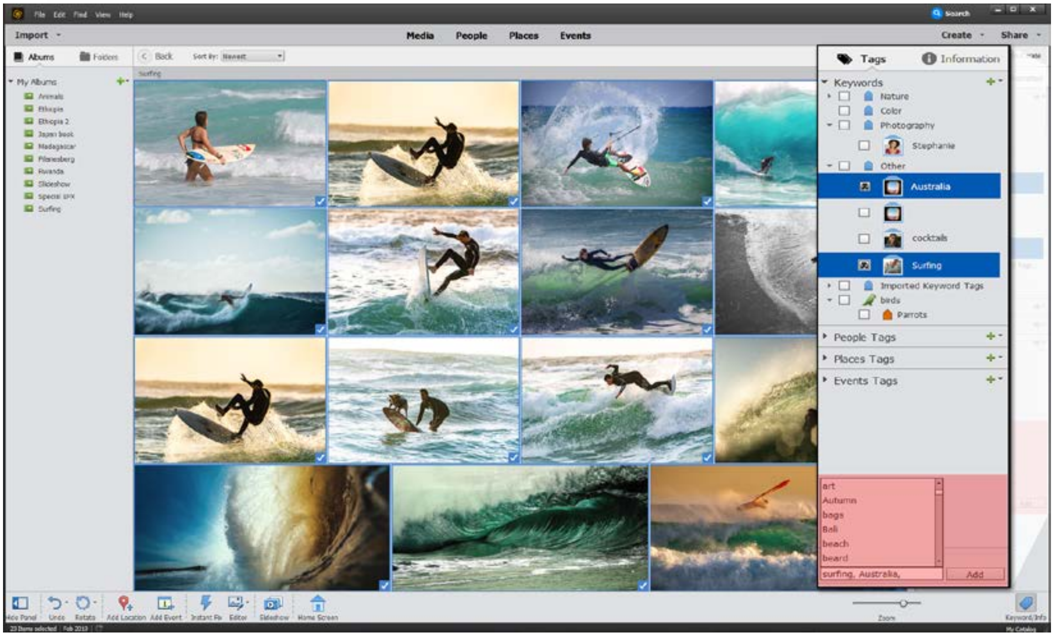
You can take your keywording as far as you have the time and patience for by being increasingly specific. For example, I could also keyword my holiday pictures with the words beaches, restaurants, funny signs, people, markets, night life, sunsets, palm trees, cocktails, and so on.

If you add multiple keywords, separate them with a comma (,) to avoid confusing the search engine. Limit keywords to five or six per image. Too many keywords can be counter-productive.

Organizing your work – Keyword Tags

One of the best features in Elements is its ability to sort out hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands of images using the tested method of **keyword tags**.

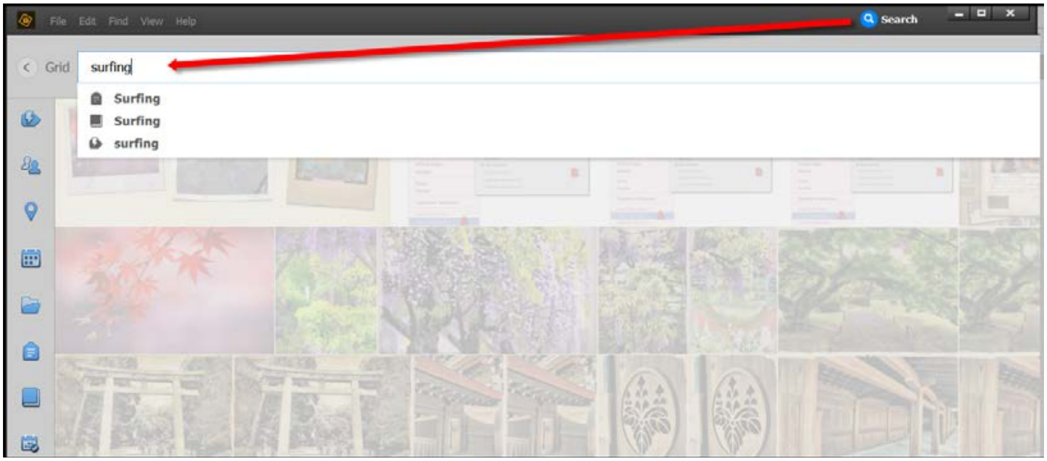
While viewing a newly imported batch of pictures, select a file by clicking it once and, on the bottom right-hand side of the screen, type in a keyword.


Import
Albums
Folders
My Albums
Back
Sort By: Newest
Media
People
Places
Events
Search
Create
Share
Tags
Information
Keywords
Nature
Color
Photography
Stephanie
Other
Australia
cocktails
Surfing
Imported Keyword Tags
birds
Parrots
People Tags
Places Tags
Events Tags
art
Autumn
bags
Bali
beach
beard
surfing, Australia,
Add
Zoom
Keyword/Info

Keyword tagging: You can see that, in the pink highlighted area, I have added the words 'Surfing' and 'Australia'. If I import and add keywords to hundreds of surfing images in the Organizer, all I need to do is click on the **Surfing/Australia** tags (both highlighted in blue here) to find those images—they can then be placed in an album called Surfing.

I think keywording is one of the most important setup features in this program. Get in the habit of adding a keyword, or keywords, to everything you import into the Organizer and you will be able to search, and find, almost any image weeks, months, and even years later. It's an incredibly efficient and effective system of image retrieval.

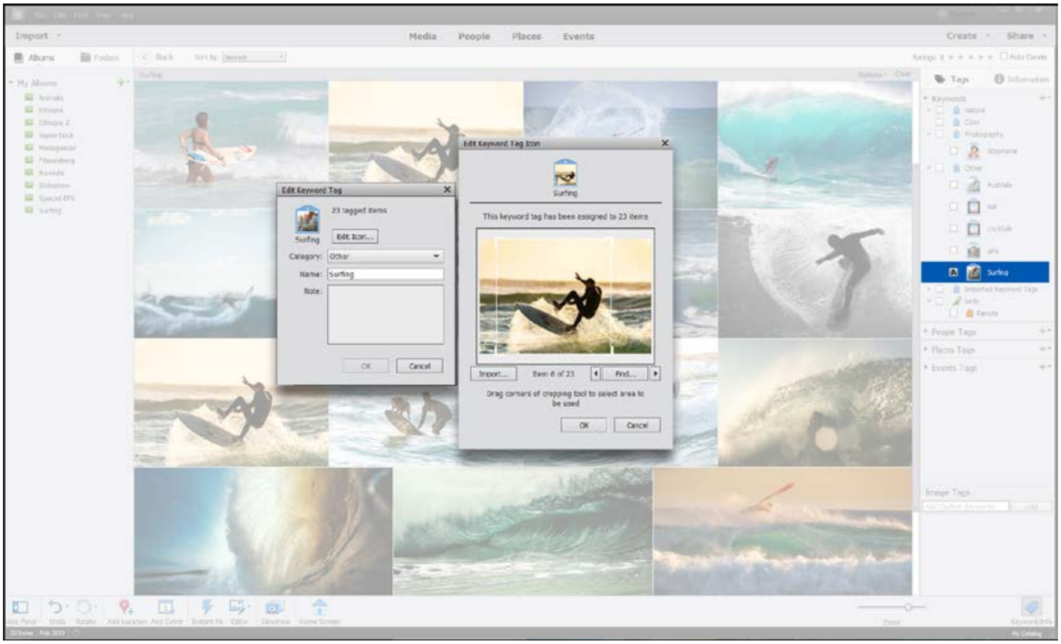
Let's say you have got back home after a vacation. Select all the images from the vacation and type the name of the place you visited. If you went to Australia, for example, all images could be keyworded as 'Australia'. But if half that time was spent in the mountains around the town of Katoomba, re-select those images of Katoomba alone and add 'Katoomba' as the keyword. If three days in Australia were spent surfing, select those images only, and add the keyword 'surfing'. This takes only a few minutes and, with a little forethought, you'll quickly be able to keyword all the important events in this album (named Holiday in Australia) so that, months or years later, you can search for Australia, surfing, or cocktails, for example, and Elements will locate those images (almost) instantly.


File
Edit
Find
View
Help
Search
Grid

surfing

Surfing
Surfing
surfing

Searching in practice: In the **Search** field (the blue magnifying glass icon, top right-hand side of the Organizer screen), type in a location and maybe an event using whatever keywords are appropriate (such as Surfing or Australia), and the Organizer will find those images within seconds. It's fast because it only has to sort through its database (which is essentially a text record); not through gigabytes of high-resolution RAW files.


Import
Media
People
Places
Events
Create
Share
Albums
Folders
Tags
Information
Keywords
Surfing
People Tags
Places Tags
Events Tags
Image Tags

Edit Keyword Tag

23 tagged items

Category: Other

Name: Surfing

Note:

Edit Keyword Tag Icon

This keyword tag has been assigned to 23 items

Item 6 of 23

Drag corners of cropping tool to select area to be used

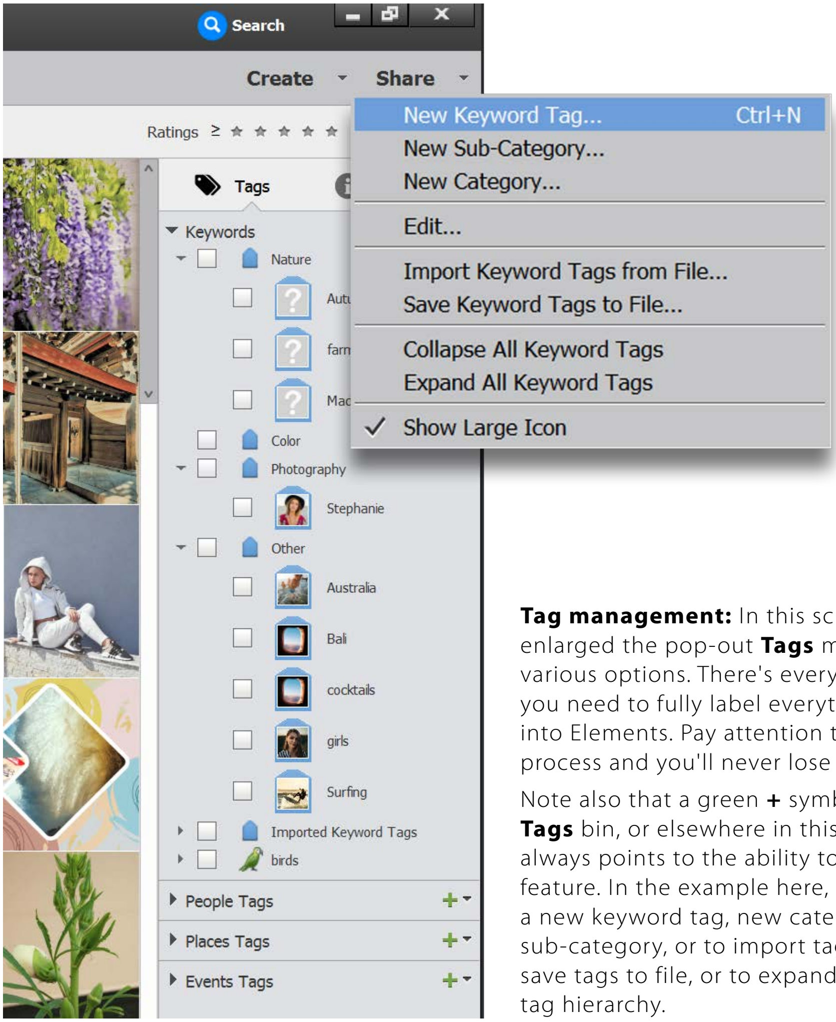
Edit Icon...
OK
Cancel
Import...
Find...
OK
Cancel

Personalizing Tags: In this screenshot, I right-clicked my **Surfing** keyword tag in the right-hand bin and chose **Edit** from the contextual menu. This brings up the **Edit Keyword Tag** window (above, on the left). You can edit the name of the tag and add comments. Clicking the **Edit Icon** tab brings up another, larger window, into which you can load a surfing picture to make that group instantly recognizable. It's a cute feature, but it won't really improve your workflow.

Keywording is an easy process, but the real magic only really begins when you try to search for specific images shot on that trip.

Keyword tags are written into the file so that, if I sent a bunch of my (tagged) images to a third party, they would be able to sort them using my attached tags. Elements' tags can be read by a range of other image editing software programs. An album, on the other hand, is a purely Elements-only feature.

If you create a new tag in the right-hand tag bin, you can apply it to any image simply by dragging that tag onto the photo thumbnail. Easy. If you have a hundred images that need the same tag, select all of them first, drag the newly made tag onto any one of the selected thumbnails, and it will automatically apply that tag to all selected images. Very smart!


Search
Create
Share
Ratings ≥ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
Tags
Keywords
Nature
Autu
farm
Mac
Color
Photography
Stephanie
Other
Australia
Bali
cocktails
girls
Surfing
Imported Keyword Tags
birds
People Tags
Places Tags
Events Tags
New Keyword Tag... Ctrl+N
New Sub-Category...
New Category...
Edit...
Import Keyword Tags from File...
Save Keyword Tags to File...
Collapse All Keyword Tags
Expand All Keyword Tags
✓ Show Large Icon

Tag management: In this screenshot, I have enlarged the pop-out **Tags** menu to show its various options. There's everything here that you need to fully label everything you bring into Elements. Pay attention to the tagging process and you'll never lose an image again.

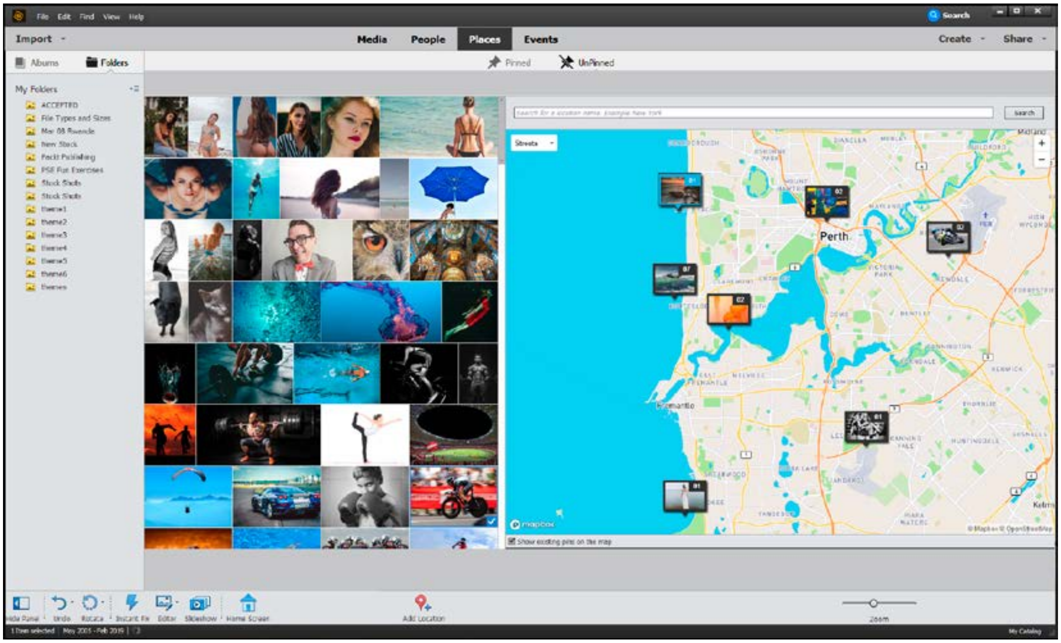
Note also that a green **+** symbol, in the **Tags** bin, or elsewhere in this application, always points to the ability to create a new feature. In the example here, use it to create a new keyword tag, new category, new sub-category, or to import tags from a file, to save tags to file, or to expand and collapse the tag hierarchy.

Organizing your work – Places

The Organizer has a huge range of features designed to help photographers keep track of, and search for, their images. I think there are too many search features—but that's just my opinion.

The **Places** feature has been in Elements for many years. Its principal use is to automatically put any image that contains **GPS data** onto an internet-driven world map so that users can identify pictures simply by seeing the locations where they were actually shot.

In earlier versions of this program (several years ago), few cameras had GPS capabilities, so the only option open to you if you needed this kind of display was to drag images from the grid on the left-hand side of the screen onto the map to 'pin' them in place instead. You can still do this.

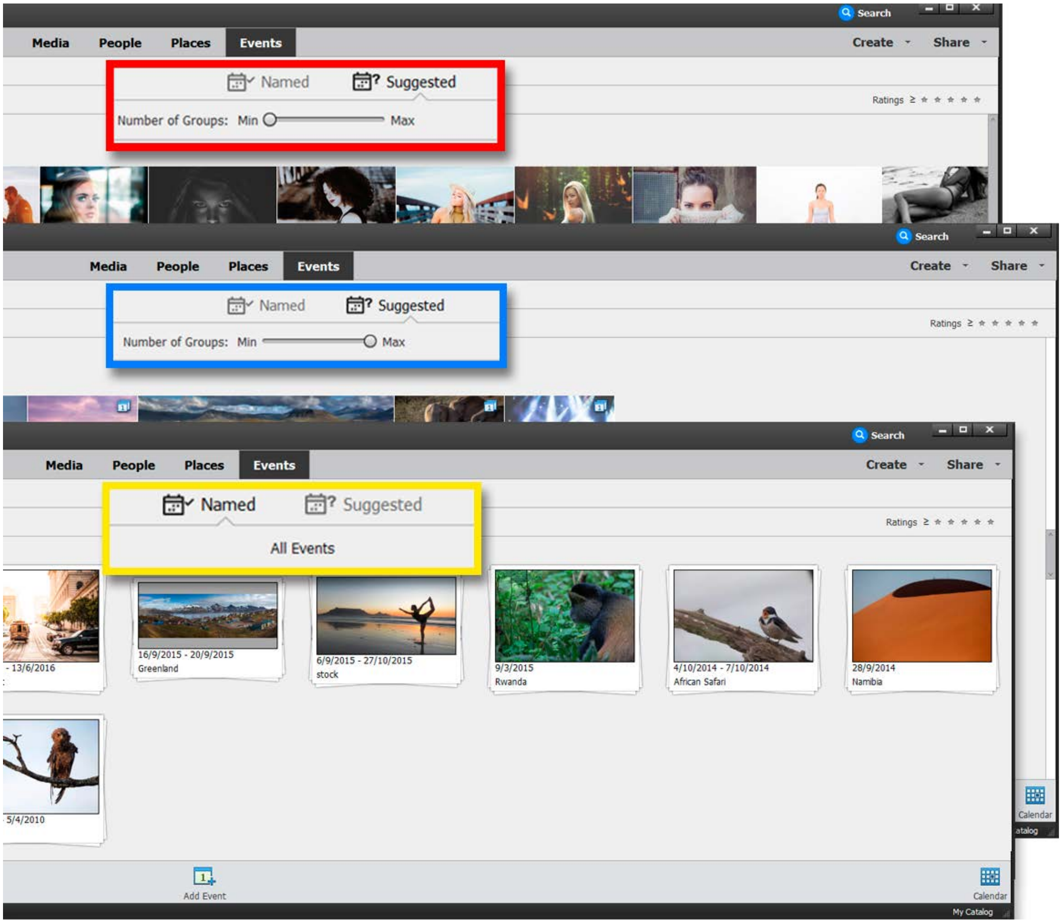


The feature has two view modes: **Pinned** and **UnPinned**. In the latter mode, you can select single or multiple images and drag them to the location where they were shot—they are then pinned to the map. Once pinned, they automatically appear under the **Pinned** tab. If you get the location wrong, simply click and drag the pinned image(s) to a new location. Double-clicking the pinned image thumbnails opens them in **Grid** view. Double-click once more and they open in full screen.

On paper, **Places** appears to be a nice feature, but after years of teaching Elements, I have yet to meet anyone that uses this feature exclusively. That might well change once all cameras record GPS information. (Note: Since 2018, **Places** no longer works in any of the previous versions of Elements. At the time of going to press, Adobe was not forthcoming about why this is so. It's fully functional in Elements 2021.)

Organizing your work – Events

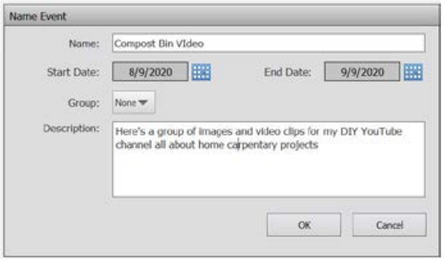
The **Events** category is, I think, more useful to everyday photographers. Why? Because **Events** starts off by using dates as a way to categorize images. We might take a bunch of shots over a family weekend or on our 12-day trip to Bali. Using the **Events** feature, these images can be grouped into either events dictated solely by the date, read from the metadata, or they can be grouped and renamed into something more memorable, such as `Family Weekend, 2019`, or simply `Bali Vacation`.


Search
Media
People
Places
Events
Create
Share
Named
Suggested
Number of Groups: Min
Max
Ratings ≥
All Events
- 13/6/2016
16/9/2015 - 20/9/2015
Greenland
6/9/2015 - 27/10/2015
stock
9/3/2015
Rwanda
4/10/2014 - 7/10/2014
African Safari
28/9/2014
Namibia
5/4/2010
Add Event
Calendar
My Catalog

Events at work: This screenshot illustrates the power of **sorting by date**. The bottom window shows **Events**, with the **Number of Groups** slider positioned to the left-hand side (highlighted in red). Everything is pushed against everything else because the search engine is effectively compressing time. The middle window (highlighted in blue) shows how, if the slider is pushed to the right, images are displayed on an almost day-by-day basis, making it easier to find photos from a day shoot, or some other short-running function. The front window illustrates what the named events look like in the **Named** tab (highlighted in orange). Events can be modified.

Events has two view modes: **Named** and **Suggested**. I normally dislike anything that *suggests* things to me (such as predictive text), but in this case, it presents all your images grouped by date. This is quite useful because it instantly orders everything in the main window, whether from an album, folder, or all media. That's a good start.

To delete an Event, right-click and choose **Remove this Event**. This pop-out menu also allows you to edit the event (that is, to add/subtract images from the event), to use **Set as Cover**, which makes the displayed image the default front page, and to use **Create a Slideshow**, which takes all the files in that specific event stack and puts them into a slideshow that can be saved for further editing in the Organizer, or directly uploaded to social media via the **Share** menu (top right-hand side of the Organizer).



Name: Compost Bin VIdeo
Start Date: 8/9/2020
End Date: 9/9/2020
Group: None
Description: Here's a group of images and video clips for my DIY YouTube channel all about home carpentary projects

Name that event:

Once selected, click the **Add Event** button at the base of the page and, in the dialog box that opens, give the event a proper name, check the dates to ensure you have grabbed the right sequence, select a **Group** if that's needed, and add a **description** if required, and click OK.

It's a good idea to award albums and folders real names, rather than going on just the dates—the same can be done using **Places**. Shift the **Number of Groups** slider so the setting that displays your **event** does so in one group of images (that is, selecting just the weekend, or just that week). Physically select all those images (do this by holding the *Shift* key down, and clicking the first and then the last image in the group). They are now all selected. If the images you need are in more than one group, it's easy to select multiple groups by drawing a marquee around those groups.

But what happens to the proper names this group of pictures was just awarded? Click the **Named** tab at the top of the screen and you'll see all the images that were custom-grouped and named now appear as stacked thumbnails. Sliding the cursor over a group displays its contents. Double-clicking an event stack reveals the individual images it contains. Clicking the **Back** button in the same screen moves those spread out images back into a stack format.

Tips:

When drawing a marquee, click and drag the cursor so it draws a rectangle over all the images you need. Blue check marks appear in all those that are selected. If you accidentally miss one image, add it by holding the *Ctrl/Command* key down while you click the mouse once (Win/Mac).

By the same process, if you select too many by accident, you can hold *Ctrl/Cmd* and click the file to deselect it.

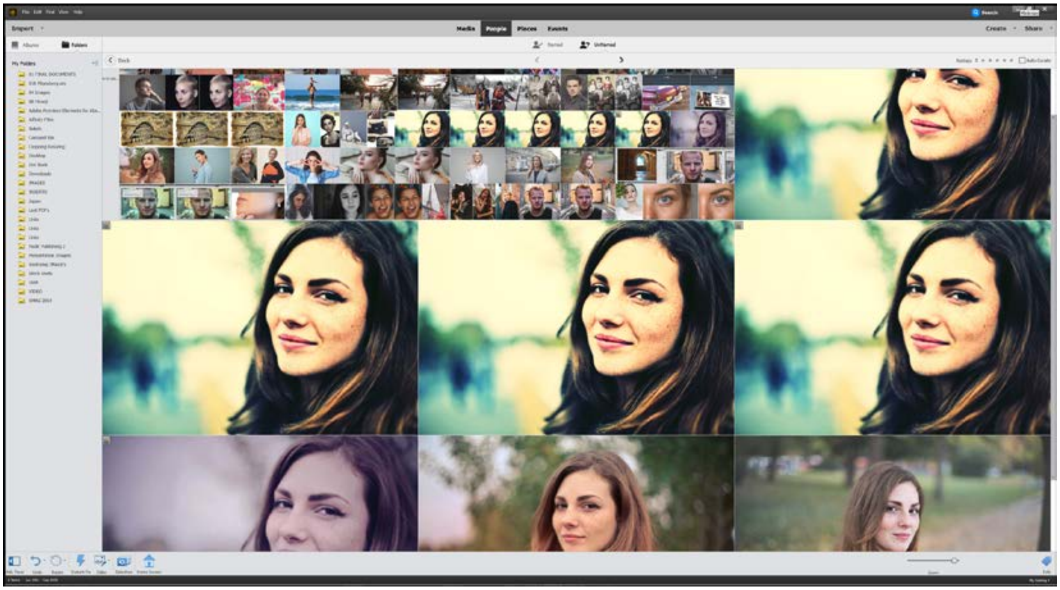
As your image collection grows, you can further refine a search, or just what's displayed in the main window, by selecting different dates from the calendar that's posted on the right-hand side of the screen. You can also create a new event in the media window. Click the **Add Event** tab at the bottom of the page, then drag those images you'd like into the new event to the right-hand side bin. Give it a proper name, check the date, and click OK.

Organizing your work – People

Elements' **People** mode is really all about using face recognition, an algorithm that analyzes images in the background as they are imported into the **Organizer** for the first time.

If it detects a face in an image, it presents it as a circular thumbnail in the main **People** window. If it *thinks* that there are several of the same person in the import, these will be automatically stacked like a deck of cards. You can view the results in the **UnNamed** panel. Every image will appear with the label **Add Name** underneath the thumbnail to begin with.

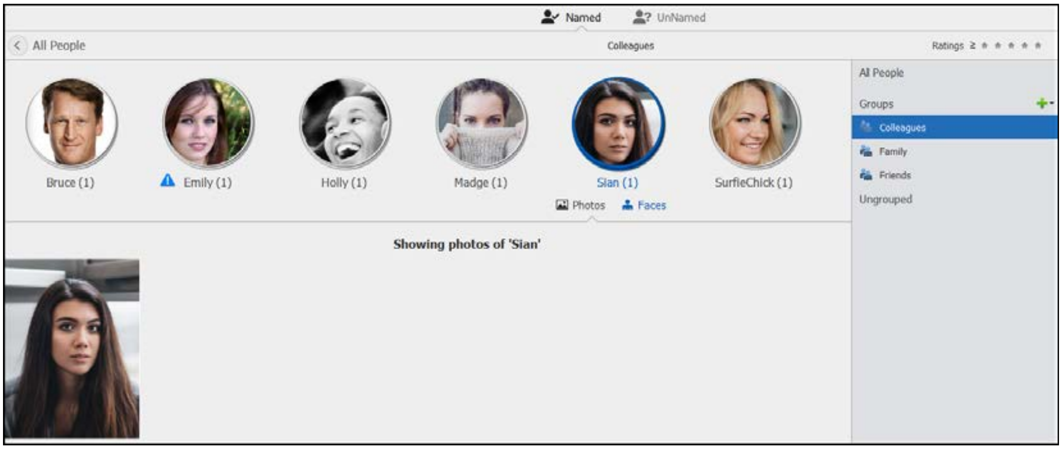
If you recognize the person depicted, click in the **Add Name** field and type in the name. As soon as you click the check symbol to the right of the field to lock it in, the thumbnail stack disappears.



This is the **People** window—you can let Elements run through your image collection to identify images with people in them automatically. It works really well—but it will also make mistakes, so some curation is usually necessary to get it looking perfect.

Where's it gone? Click into the **Named** window and there you'll see the newly named stack. Hover the cursor over the stack and you'll see the words **Faces** or **Photos** appear. Click **Photos** to reveal the full image in which the face was detected, or click **Faces** to reveal just the face or faces in that group.

Elements' **People** window will find images of your friends—but it also finds every image that looks like a face, including pictures in posters and abstract backgrounds. These can easily be discounted by right-clicking the icon and choosing **Don't show Again**. As soon as an image gets a proper name, it's automatically moved into the **Named** tab and stacks with similarly named images. For those of us that prefer to identify our images based on the content, and specifically on the people depicted in the files, you'll find the **People** feature very handy.



Organizing your people: Like the keywords feature, the **People** feature, shown in this screenshot, allows you to subdivide your found faces into smaller categories, or groups, as seen on the right-hand side of the screen. Elements starts you off with **Colleagues**, **Family**, and **Friends** but, of course, clicking the green plus (**+**) symbol allows you to add new group categories when needed.

Like most organizational tools in Elements, you can choose to work simply by adopting just keywords, or maybe the ratings, or you can use a combination of everything covered in this section to create a sophisticated and deep searchable database. The best advice is to make up your mind regarding which way is best for you before you start; that way, you can streamline your workload from day one rather than having to go back over everything that's been imported into the Organizer because you changed your mind about how to organize your images.

Pre-planning will save you a lot of time and effort.

Tips:

You can merge one stack into another simply by click-dragging one file over another. You can further refine the sort process by adding stacks to groups—such as **Family**. Click the **Groups** tab on the bottom right-hand side of the main window, and either use one of the default groups, or make a new one by clicking the green **+** symbol. As with most Elements features, there's no limit to the number of groups you can have.

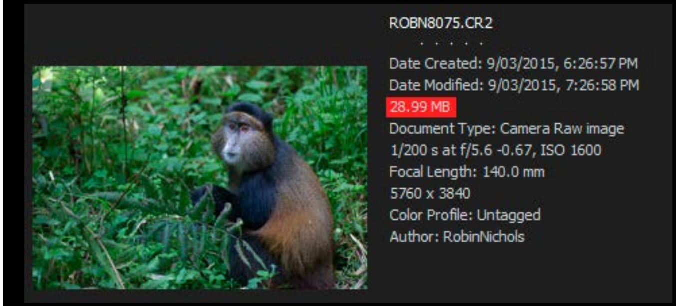
If you discover an 'inappropriate' face in the stack, and right-click the Faces icon, and choose **Not...**, or just rename it, it places it out of that stack into its own, new stack. You can also use this pop-out menu to assign that image as a profile photo (this is the default top of the stack). Finally, there's the **Don't Show Again** command, which hides that image from ever appearing in the people view again.

File formats: JPEG and RAW

Nearly all digital cameras these days can shoot and record two types of image file: JPEG and RAW files. Some newer models can also record digital negative RAW files. We'll look at these later in this chapter.

The difference between JPEGs and RAW files is simple: JPEG files are 8-bit picture files. These are processed in-camera and then compressed (squashed) to maximize storage space, before being saved to the memory card.

RAW files are usually 10-bit files that have little or no processing applied in-camera, and they are not compressed before being saved to the memory card. The result is a file that is several times larger than a JPEG, but one that can be edited to a far higher degree of accuracy than the humble JPEG.


ROBN8075.CR2

Date Created: 9/03/2015, 6:26:57 PM
Date Modified: 9/03/2015, 7:26:58 PM
28.99 MB
Document Type: Camera Raw image
1/200 s at f/5.6 -0.67, ISO 1600
Focal Length: 140.0 mm
5760 x 3840
Color Profile: Untagged
Author: RobinNichols

Though shooting in the RAW format is recommended, you'll find that your camera's files are quite different to RAW files from other camera models. Sony RAW files use the suffix .ARN; Olympus = .ORF, and Nikon = .NEF.

Here's a view of a (Canon) RAW file displayed in a browser window. It has the .CR2 suffix common to all Canon cameras.

Although each camera manufacturer shares the same three-letter suffix across all of its camera range, RAW files produced by different models are quite different to each other (that is, RAW files from the Nikon D7000 are different to the Nikon D7200, D800, and D850 RAW files. This is why it takes companies such as Adobe several months to provide an update for the different RAW file types designed for each new camera make and model. If you are an early adopter, waiting for Adobe to catch up and release a compatibility update can be a source of frustration.

RAW files have to be edited in a specific RAW edit window, called Camera RAW, which is separate from the regular **Quick**, **Guided**, or **Expert** mode windows. Once edited in this space, a RAW file must be either closed (there's no **saving** with RAW files – it automatically records all the edits applied to it), or it can be saved in a more universally acceptable file format for storage, backup, or later distribution.

Such formats include JPEGs, Tiff files, digital negative files, or even Photoshop files. But what's the difference between these formats and when would be the best situation to use them?

File format characteristics

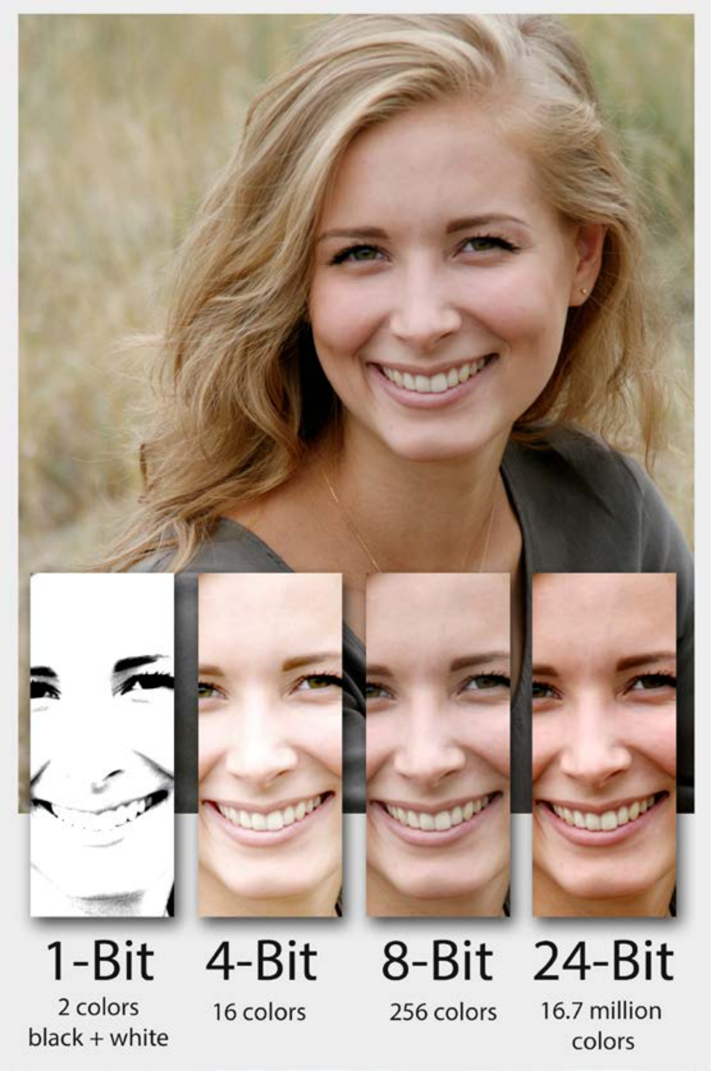
Choosing the right format to save your edited work is an important decision because it can have direct ramifications on both final image quality and your backup and archiving practices.

Original .CR2 RAW file
28Mb
Fully compressed .JPG file
800kb
Uncompressed .JPG file
18.76Mb
Uncompressed .png file
39.9Mb
Tiff file
46.5Mb
Photoshop .psd file
62.9Mb

Physical file sizes: To illustrate the different properties of image files, I saved the same photo in **six different file formats**. Because JPEGs are compressible, its saved state is considerably smaller than everything else, hence its popularity in social media, the web, and emailing. Compressed to the maximum (the smallest saved file size), reduces it to only 800 KB - less than one megabyte – but that compression level would seriously damage the quality. Despite my original Canon `.CR2` RAW file being 28.99 MB, the `.png` file is larger (39.9 MB), followed by the slightly compressed (though lossless) TIFF file (46.5 MB), the Photoshop file (62.9 MB), and the uncompressed TIFF file (63.3 MB).

- **JPEG** (`.jpg`): This is a compressed *lossy* format (*lossy* means it loses quality when saved and compressed) that's ideal for emailing, photo books, web, social media, and photo lab printing (note: most photo book companies only accept JPEG and PNG files).
- **RAW**: RAW files are untouched data straight from the camera. They contain four times more picture data than a JPG, are good for shooting in any light, plus they take any amount of editing without loss of quality.
- **DNG** (`.dng`): A digital negative file is like a universal RAW file, retaining all of the benefits of regular RAW files while retaining a higher degree of application than a regular RAW file. Adobe Lightroom, for example, is a program optimized to work best with DNG files.

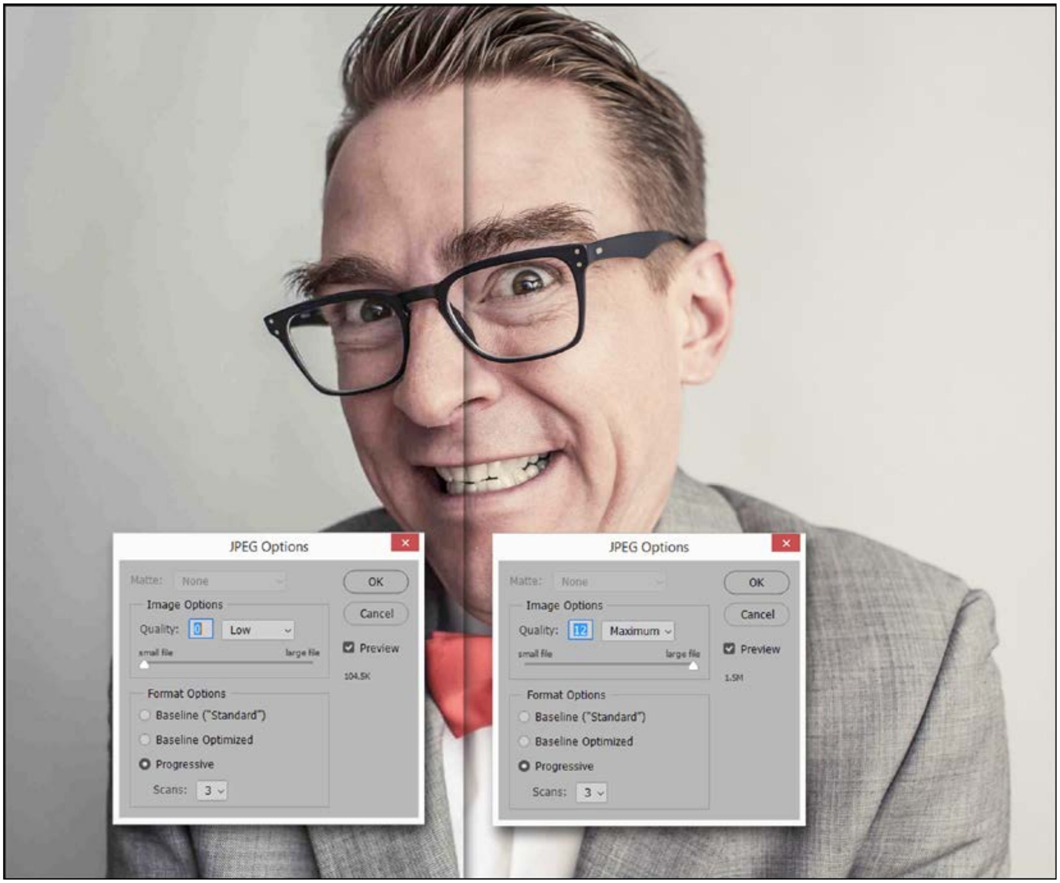
- **PSD** (`.psd`): These have no compression and can store extra (Photoshop) data within the file itself, such as layers, paths, and selections, thus retaining a high degree of editability. This is good for preserving the best quality for complex editing and commercial print projects.
- **TIFF**: Similar to `.psd` files, TIFF files can be compressed by up to 25% with no loss of quality. Tiff files preserve features such as selections and layers. Good for preserving best quality, editing, and commercial printing. Tiff files can end up being larger than the same file saved in the `.psd` format.
- **PNG**: Portable Network Graphics files are used primarily for website design and in photo books where background transparency is a requirement.



The curious term **Bit depth** relates to the amount of color information held in an image file.

The higher the bit depth in a file, the more color information it contains; and more information produces significantly smoother tonal gradation, which in turn produces a nicer-looking and more realistic image.

Single-bit color is made up of two colors only—black and white - rarely used in photography other than in the creation of masks - 8-bit color produces 256 tones, which was considered an acceptable number for the photograph - until, that is, 24-bit color came along and produced 16.7 million tones. No need to count them, they just look good. Top-of-the-range cameras can now record 10-bit and 12-files.



JPEG Options

Matte: None

Image Options

Quality: 0 Low

☑ Preview

104.5K

Format Options

○ Baseline ("Standard")

○ Baseline Optimized

● Progressive

Scans: 3

JPEG Options

Matte: None

Image Options

Quality: 12 Maximum

☑ Preview

1.5M

Format Options

○ Baseline ("Standard")

○ Baseline Optimized

● Progressive

Scans: 3

Too much compression? Of all the file formats available in Elements, the one that's perhaps the most useful is JPEG. The close-up of this bespectacled gentleman displays the problems over-compressing JPEG files, at left, will create. Don't get me wrong—JPEG files are great because they can be compressed. However, if they are squashed too much (that is, **set to level 7 or lower** in the **JPEG Options** box), you'll see a significant deterioration in image clarity and color (the left half of this composite image was set to **Quality**: 0, producing a tiny file).

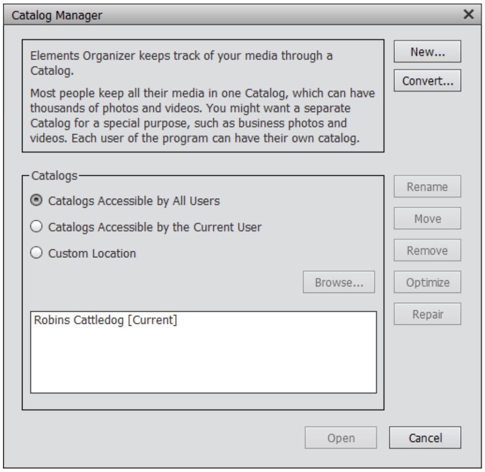
Too much compression, or repeated saving (and therefore repeated compression), will generate ugly **image artifacts**, for example, in the form of **posterization** (banding) seen mostly in the smoother tones. Over-compression will also create inaccurate color, and might even introduce blocky-looking pixels when compared to the minimal compression level 12 setting, as seen on the right of the illustration above, producing a larger saved file but with smoother, more accurate tones.

Managing catalogs

The Catalog Manager (**Organizer>File>Manage Catalogs**) is used for several tasks. These include the following:

- Create new catalogs.
- Rename existing catalogs.
- Convert a previous, older version of an Elements catalog to the new version of the software.
- Optimize a catalog—this helps reduce its size, making it more efficient.

While a software-driven data backup is a good procedure to set up for all users, it might not back up your Photoshop Elements catalog. And even if it did, it wouldn't be in a format that Elements can recognize, should you need to restore it after a software mishap.



Catalog Manager

Elements Organizer keeps track of your media through a Catalog.

Most people keep all their media in one Catalog, which can have thousands of photos and videos. You might want a separate Catalog for a special purpose, such as business photos and videos. Each user of the program can have their own catalog.

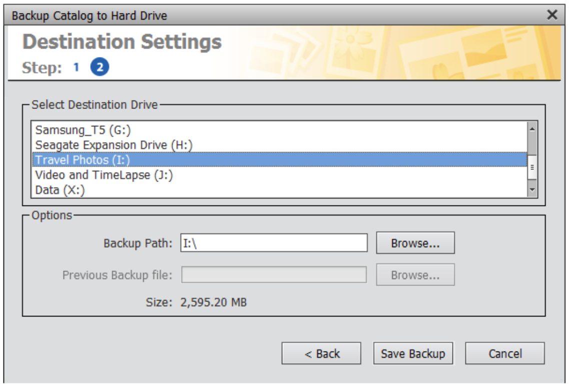
Catalogs

● Catalogs Accessible by All Users

○ Catalogs Accessible by the Current User

○ Custom Location

Robins Cattledog [Current]



Backup Catalog to Hard Drive

Destination Settings

Step: 1 2

Select Destination Drive

Samsung_T5 (G:)
Seagate Expansion Drive (H:)
Travel Photos (I:)
Video and TimeLapse (J:)
Data (X:)

Options

Backup Path: I:\

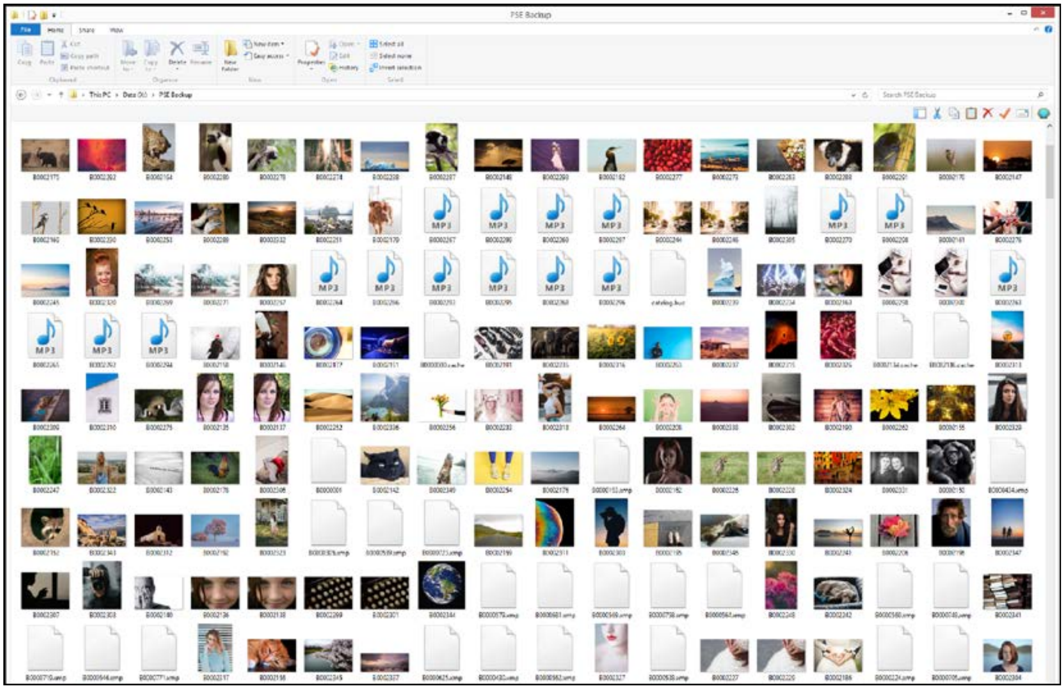
Previous Backup file:

Size: 2,595.20 MB

Back up the catalog: It's important to ensure that your backed-up catalog is saved to a location different to where the default catalog is stored. For most, this means saving it to a different drive – in the screenshot above, there are **five** different drives available for backup.

Tip:

If you purchase a RAID drive (multiple hard drives in one box), you can program it to back up once to each drive, essentially giving you two complete backups in one operation, so if one drive fails, you still have a second copy to use. Another use of the RAID drive is to split the backups 50/50. This greatly enhances the read/write speeds of the device but, in this mode, if one drive goes down, you lose everything because the process actually splits files rather than putting one file on disk A, then the next file on disk B, and so on. Nothing in digital imaging can be 100% safe, but if you use a reliable RAID system it should still give you years of good service.



What's actually inside the catalog? Although Elements' backup process can be a lifesaver, it's not the same as a regular Windows or Mac operating system backup. With Elements, the backed up files are referenced in a completely different way to those that are copied to a different hard drive – which is why if you open the Elements backup file, everything appears scrambled, as you see here. However, if you reinstate the catalog via the correct process, everything reappears in perfect order.

The catalog is where all your hard work is stored: tags, keywords, albums, captions, places, maps, and events; as well as your images, as RAW, JPEG, TIFF, PNG or PSD files; plus a lot of other stuff that helps Elements be as efficient as possible.

The files' proper names are reinstated once a **Catalog Restore** function is completed. Generally, we only access an Elements backup if the original has been compromised and we need to restore the entire catalogs contents.

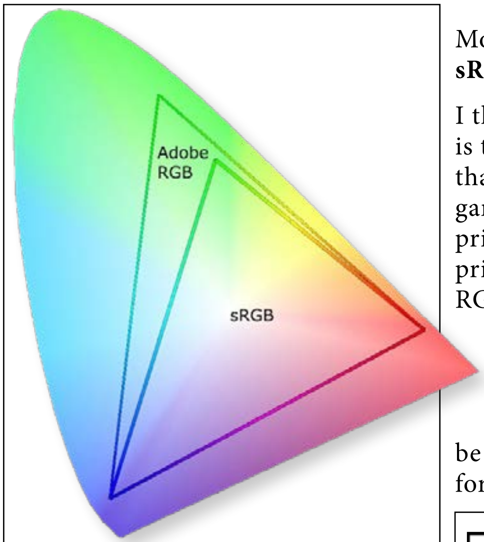
In an emergency, you can still open the `Backup` folder and pull out images, if need be. If you have issues with the current catalog, it's easy enough to choose **File>Restore Catalog** from the **Organizer** and reload the entire catalog from its backup location.

The logical way to perform a catalog backup is to choose **File>Backup Catalog** in the **Organizer** and follow the prompts. Make sure that the location of the backup is not on the local drive—put it on an external drive. Elements insists on a full backup to begin with, then a partial backup if you are just updating work as you go.

Color spaces

Cameras, all monitors, and most printers can display only a limited range of colors – this is called the **color space**. The industry standard space is called **sRGB color** (Standard, Red, Green, and Blue), but there are many other *spaces*, such as **Adobe RGB (1998)** and **ProPhoto RGB**, to name just two.

Most color spaces correctly claim to encompass a broader range of color than sRGB. While this is certainly true, actually being able to see an increase in the range of colors with one of these wider-ranging spaces, on both a computer screen and in print, is a characteristic that's hard to evaluate because most screens and printers cannot recreate the number of colors captured by the camera regardless of what color space it was recorded in.



Adobe RGB 1998 versus sRGB Color space: Camera menus tend to be somewhat different from each other—refer to the camera manual to find the option of color space in the menu setup.

In the illustration above, compare the color range difference between Adobe RGB and the narrower sRGB space. For many, the fact that sRGB has a smaller range of colors makes no difference—it's only when asked to reproduce very specific colors (for example, in a catalog) that you need to consider spaces such as Adobe RGB 1998.

Most consumer cameras can only function in the **sRGB** or **Adobe RGB (1998) color spaces**.

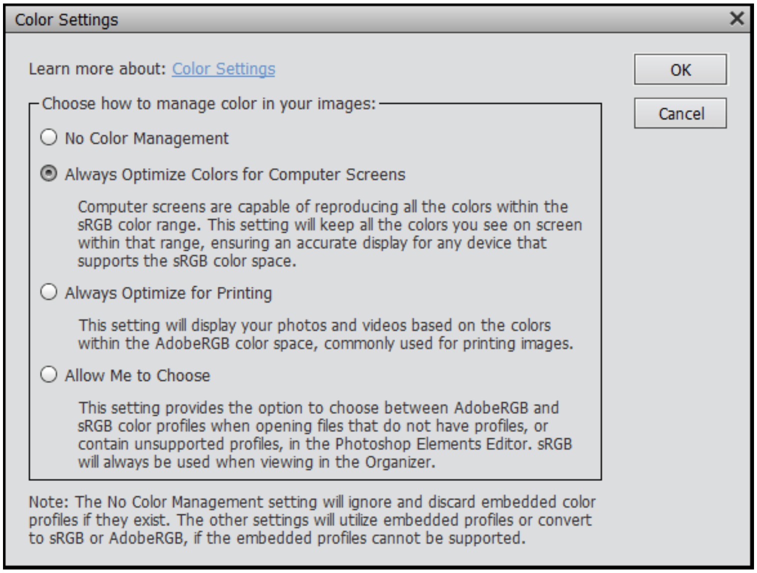
I think the best practice for amateur photographers is to choose sRGB. This matches the range of colors that most monitors can display. Plus it matches the gamut, or range, of most consumer photo inkjet printers. That said, some commercial lithographic print businesses now require files to be Adobe RGB (1998) in order to match the high-end print machines they use. If you are considering a move to commercial photography, then Adobe RGB (1998) is the best color space setting. That said, a good color pre-press business should also be able to make these space conversions for you, for a fee.

Adobe
Ps ADOBE PHOTOSHOP
Camera Raw plug-in installer

Keep it current: Elements is fully compatible with most RAW file formats, provided that your software is up to date. To ensure this is the case, go to the **Help** menu at the top of the Organizer, or any of the edit screens, and choose **Help>Updates**. This normally works perfectly but occasionally it doesn't load the latest software update. You'll notice this when trying to open a RAW file from a new camera. Elements will state that it "...**does not recognize that format**...." Try updating the software through the **Help** menu. If that fails, go to the Adobe site and follow the prompts to download the update and install it manually.

Color management options

It's a sad fact that all image editing is virtually worthless if the monitor on which you make all your creative decisions doesn't actually represent the correct color, brightness, and contrast accurately.



Learn more about: Color Settings

Choose how to manage color in your images:

○ No Color Management

● Always Optimize Colors for Computer Screens

Computer screens are capable of reproducing all the colors within the sRGB color range. This setting will keep all the colors you see on screen within that range, ensuring an accurate display for any device that supports the sRGB color space.

○ Always Optimize for Printing

This setting will display your photos and videos based on the colors within the AdobeRGB color space, commonly used for printing images.

○ Allow Me to Choose

This setting provides the option to choose between AdobeRGB and sRGB color profiles when opening files that do not have profiles, or contain unsupported profiles, in the Photoshop Elements Editor. sRGB will always be used when viewing in the Organizer.

Note: The No Color Management setting will ignore and discard embedded color profiles if they exist. The other settings will utilize embedded profiles or convert to sRGB or AdobeRGB, if the embedded profiles cannot be supported.

Color management—the process of making sure that what you see onscreen is both accurate to life and will be correctly reproduced online and in print—is, I think, an unnecessarily complex operation. Although Elements' calibration is not nearly as controllable as that found in Photoshop CC, it's presented in a reasonably easy format that should work well in most situations. And if you are sending your work into a commercial print environment, you can always let them handle the finer complexities of color reproduction, which allows you to pay more attention to the editing process.

What you'll find in the program's **Color Settings** dialog box are four simple questions:

- **No Color Management**
- **Always Optimize Colors for Computer Screens**
- **Always Optimize for Printing**
- **Allow Me to Choose**

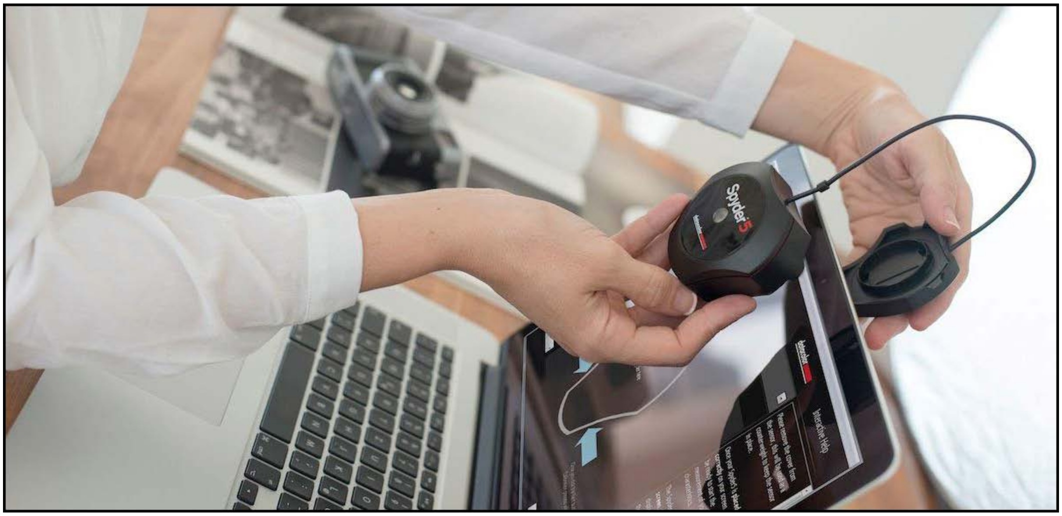
Essentially, this means that if you choose to ignore any color management, Elements will discard existing color space settings, but if you choose to optimize colors, the color range will be kept within the existing sRGB color range.

If you go for the printing option, it would be best to set AdobeRGB (1998) in your camera. The **Allow Me to Choose** option permits the user to make a choice between sRGB or AdobeRGB (1998).

Screen and printer calibration

Another important technique for ensuring that what you see onscreen is accurate is to calibrate your monitor with a hardware calibration device.

These third-party sensors plug into the USB outlet on the computer and hang over the screen. Run the associated software and the sensor will determine whether the RGB colors displayed onscreen really are 100% red, green, blue, white, gray, and black. If the screen is different to the known value for these colors, the software adjusts the brightness and color to make it display correctly. This is a far more accurate method of color management than using the human eye to gauge the settings. As a general rule, screens need calibrating every six months or so, especially if they are used a lot.



Screen calibration: Attaching a USB-powered hardware calibrator to the laptop or desktop screen is easy. Pictured is the (reasonably inexpensive) ColorVision Spyder 5 device. This process needs to be done (probably) once every six months or so, to ensure that what you see onscreen is a realistic representation of the original image. It does not ensure print accuracy—that's the job of another device (see below).

i1 PRO 3 PLUS
X-Rite
PANTONE

Printer calibration: Making what comes out in print look exactly the same as what's seen onscreen is a slightly trickier and more expensive operation.

For this you need another scanner that can read both screens and test prints. It takes longer to print and scan the resulting chequerboard of colors, but once done, the accuracy of screen to printed paper is exceptional.

Organizer keyboard shortcuts

I always provide my students with a list of 10-20 keyboard shortcuts. I can usually see that most are not happy with having yet more stuff to remember. But if you limit yourself to using some of these, instead of relying on the mouse all the time, you'll not only reduce the risk of RSI, but you'll find many repetitive tasks so much safer and faster to execute. Two hands are always better than one:

Operations and their respective Windows/Mac shortcuts are as follows

- Undo last operation: *Ctrl/Cmd + Z*
- Redo last operation: *Ctrl/Cmd + Y*
- Copy: *Ctrl/Cmd + C*
- Paste: *Ctrl/Cmd + P*
- Select all: *Ctrl/Cmd + A*
- Deselect: *Ctrl/Cmd + Shift + D*
- Rotate image 90 degrees left: *Ctrl/Cmd + Left arrow*
- Rotate image 90 degrees right: *Ctrl/Cmd + Right Arrow*
- Adjust date and time: *Ctrl/Cmd + J*
- Edit in **Expert** Edit Mode: *Ctrl/Cmd + I*
- Edit in Premiere Elements Editor: *Ctrl/Cmd + M*
- Zoom in: *Ctrl/Cmd + +*
- Zoom out: *Ctrl/Cmd + -*
- OK: *Enter*
- Cancel: *Esc*
- Display metadata properties: *Alt + Enter*
- Add caption: *Ctrl/Cmd + Shift + T*
- Update thumbnails: *Ctrl/Cmd + Shift + U*
- Set photo as desktop wallpaper: *Ctrl/Cmd + W*
- Open Color Settings dialog box: *Ctrl/Cmd + Alt + G*

Summary

It's always been something of a dry subject, but setting up a computer for quality photo editing tasks is not as simple a task as many might imagine—and of course, it's far more demanding on your equipment than simply doing a few emails and surfing the internet!

This chapter explained the basics of setting up a computer: adding memory, choosing hard drives, considering backup drive options, as well as learning about color spaces, and calibrating the monitor so that what we see onscreen is an accurate depiction of what we photographed. It's a big topic but once understood, it will send you out into the editing universe well prepared.

We also took note of the many tools found in Elements Organizer that are designed to help us keep track of our ever-increasing photo and video media collections. And again, although this is often seen as being as exciting as cleaning the bathroom or filling out a tax return, once done, you'll find yourself on top of the image cataloging process, thus making future expansions to your image collections significantly less problematic.

And we haven't even edited an image yet! But coming up in the next chapter, you'll find a heap of great information about adding a range of basic and easy edits to images—all of which can produce brilliant results: dealing with RAW files, saving files, cropping, straightening, lightening, darkening, and a great deal more. It doesn't take long to produce truly impressive results with this editing application.

3

The Basics of Image Editing

To many, image editing, or more specifically, the word *Photoshop*, conjures up ideas of fantastical landscapes, or of portraits of impossibly beautiful people retouched to the brink of plausibility, and beyond.

If you are not interested in taking your creativity into the realm of photo illustration, or image composites, you'll use photo editing to make your digital photos look exactly as they appeared when the shutter button was first pressed.

But why would we need this sort of artificial aid in the first place? It's a frequently asked question, and the simple answer is that **what we see is not always what our camera records**. This is because we have a brain that can be very flexible when it comes to processing the visual information it receives from any scene, whereas a camera simply responds to the light it is pointed at—with essentially a rather limited ability to translate that information into a faithful, realistic reproduction of any scene.

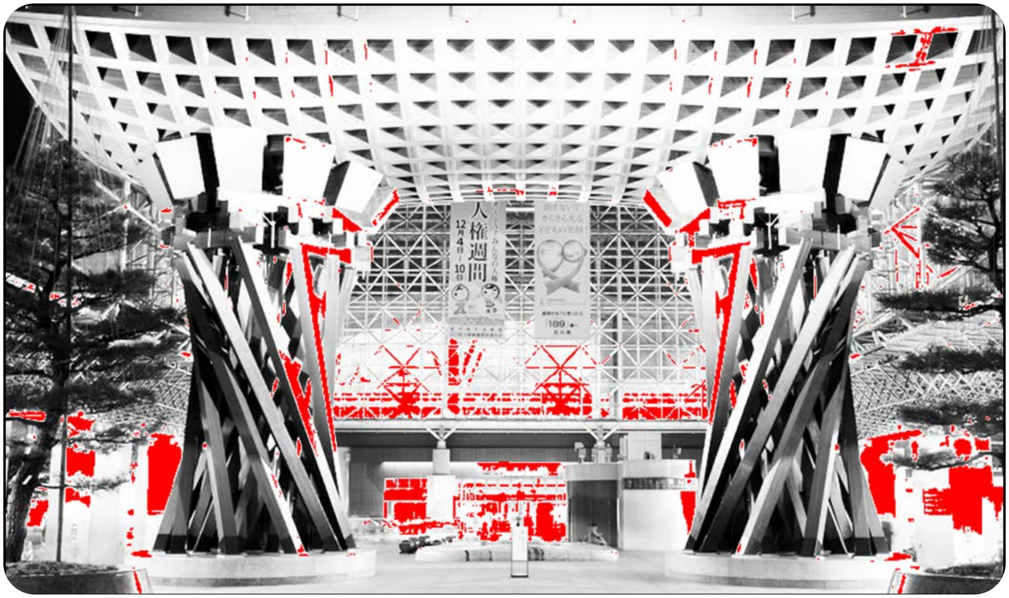
One of the biggest drawbacks of image editing is its apparent complexity. No one wants to spend hours slaving over a keyboard with little to show for their toil. In this chapter, you'll discover the basics for making your RAW (and JPEG) files look just as they did when you first pressed the shutter button.

But you'll also learn how to generate some very cool effects and creative looks, all with very little time and effort. That might leave you with extra time to go out and shoot more great pictures!

By the end of this chapter, you'll be able to transform your RAW files into something that better resembles a perfect picture using the tools and techniques covered in this chapter.

In this chapter, we'll learn about the following:

- The editing workflow and best practices
- Editing RAW files
- In Detail: Basics tab
- In Detail: Sharpening
- In Detail: Noise reduction
- In Detail: Profile browser
- Other features
- 10 ways to open an image
- Understanding picture resolution
- Cropping for better composition
- The Straighten tool
- Resampling
- Instant photo fixes using the Organizer
- Saving files
- Version Sets
- File formats
- Auto correction tools
- Mastering contrast with Levels
- Shadow/Highlights
- Adjusting color using Hue/Saturation
- Smooth Skin
- Simple retouching—Spot removal

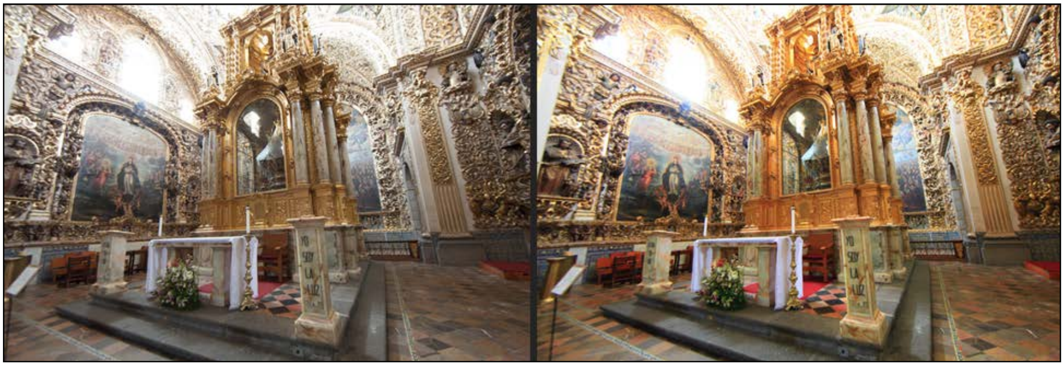


Use the **gamut warning** feature to discover what tones you might inadvertently be missing in your edits using the power of the Camera RAW utility.

The editing workflow and best practices

Nearly all digital camera images need some form of adjustment to make them appear as the scene did when the image was captured. What many might not immediately appreciate is that there will always be a visual difference between a RAW file and a JPEG file once they are downloaded to the computer.

This is because the former is neither compressed nor processed in-camera, while JPEG files are compressed and processed in-camera. However, they are also 8-bit files, which contain considerably less picture information than a 10-, 12-, or 14-bit RAW file.

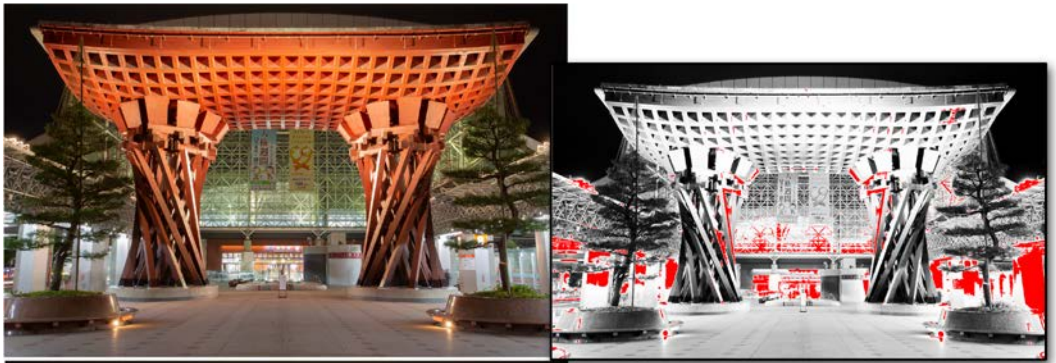


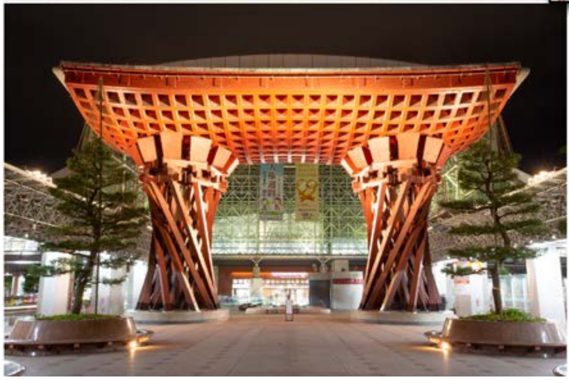
These two images are a working example of how in-camera JPEG file processing can initially produce a significantly better-looking version of the same shot—compared to the **14-bit (Canon) RAW file** on the left. That said, because this was shot inside a poorly lit church, there's some underexposure present, but worse than that, there's a lot of overexposure in the highlights. This is typical of any photograph taken in a dark place that has little ambient light and a lot of artificial lighting. Most of the "lost" detail in the shadows and the highlights should be recoverable from the RAW file in Elements. The same detail most probably can't be recovered from the JPEG file, because it has already discarded a fair amount of that detail in-camera when the file was reduced from 14 to 8 bits.

Best practices for editing files are as follows:

1. **Download** your images to the computer, if this is your default storage place. If not, download them to an external drive.
2. **Back up** the files on the computer to a hard drive, a second drive, and/or the cloud.
3. **Open** a file (see *10 ways to open a photo for editing* later in this chapter).
4. Crop the image to the desired shape or format (be aware that cropping removes pixels, which in turn reduces the printable size of the file—see the *Cropping for better composition* section coming up in this chapter).

5. Check and adjust the **white balance**. For RAW files, do this in the special **Camera RAW** editing window. You can reset any camera's **White Balance** setting from **As Shot** to **Shade**, **Cloudy**, **Indoors**, **Fluorescent**, or whichever setting you have in your camera. If the color is wrong in a JPEG, you can also force it to open in Camera RAW (**File>Open in Camera RAW**), or use one of Elements' seven color adjustment tools (**Enhance>Adjust Color**) to make things appear better.
6. Check and adjust **Brightness** and **Contrast**.
7. Adjust color intensity using the **Saturation** and/or **Vibrance** tools.
8. Fine-tune the color using tools such as the **Adjust Color for Skin Tone** tool.
9. Apply **Retouching** where needed.
10. Add special effects, text, images, and so on.
11. Adjust **Sharpness**, fine-tuning it to the file's ultimate usage: web or print.



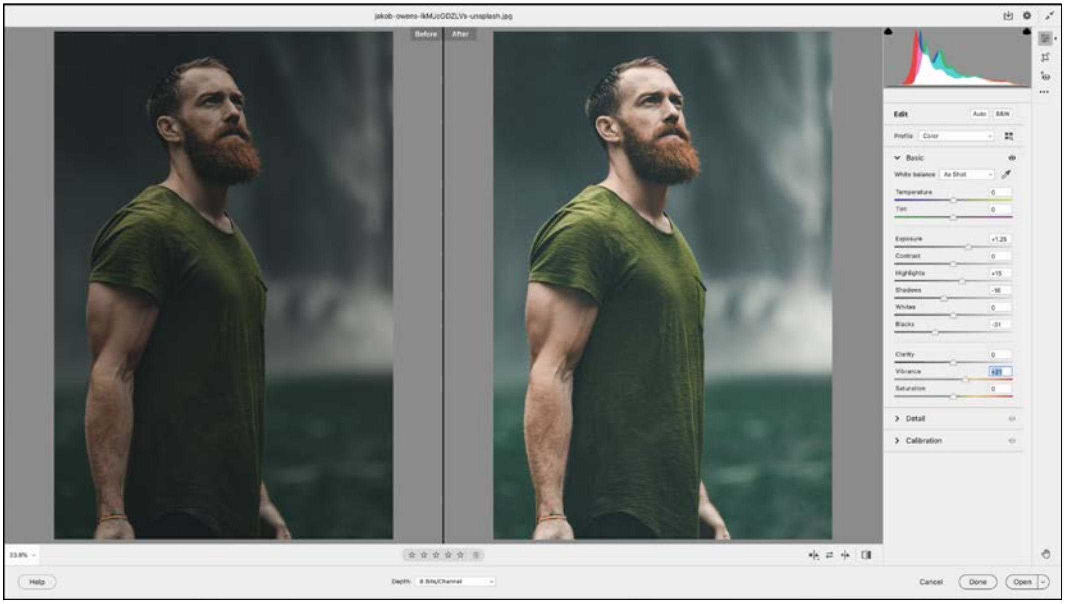


I don't know if any photographer has ever made a comparative study between the success rate of a RAW file versus a JPEG file. I know that at the beginning of the digital imaging revolution, a lot of so-called professional photographers would say that using RAW files was akin to some sort of religious experience and anyone contemplating JPEGs should be barred from civilized society. Maybe I exaggerate a little, but there was, and to a certain extent there still is, a degree of negative press against the JPEG file format. That said, here's a clear example of the type of shooting situation where a RAW file really does lord it over a JPEG result. Night time photography is contrasty—the JPEG overexposes and loses detail in the precious highlights—as illustrated in the red overlay in the top right. The JPEG, at the bottom, looks punchier in terms of color—but is missing most of the lighter tones, while the RAW file at the top reproduces something a lot closer to what the human eye experiences.

Overview: editing RAW files

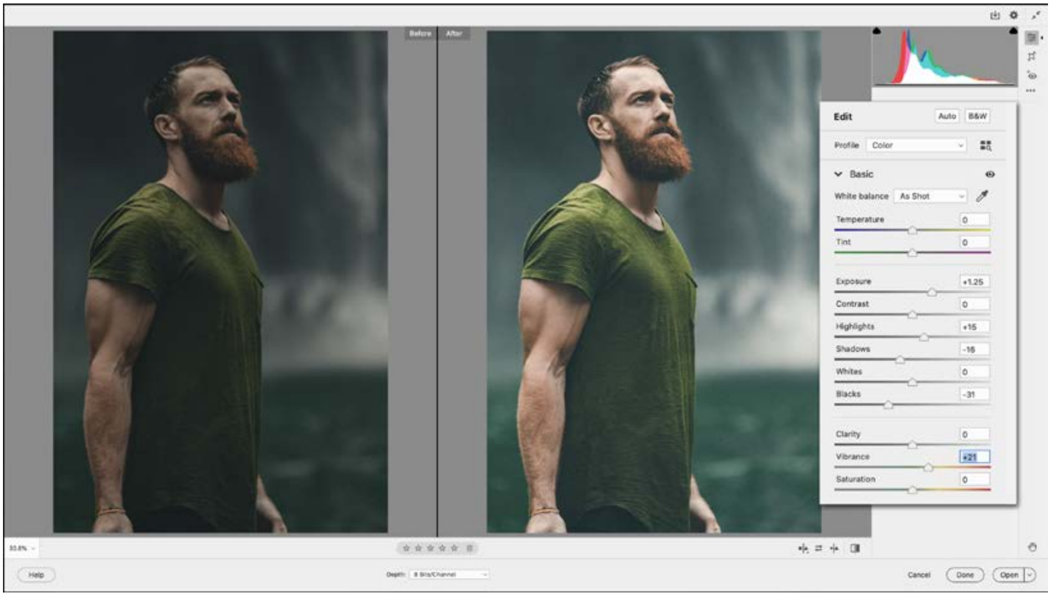
RAW files produce the best photo editing results because they contain about four times the image data of an 8-bit JPEG file. But this extra size can be annoying as it uses up more hard drive space, files can't be emailed, and, initially, they look rather drab compared to a JPEG file. That said, some **quick editing** in Elements' native Camera RAW utility will usually produce an image that looks a lot better than most JPEGs.

One aspect of RAW files that might confuse beginners is that they can only be opened/processed using the **Camera RAW** utility, which is quite separate to the **Quick/Guided/Expert** edit modes. It's a bit like having a specialist application within the parent application, Photoshop Elements Photo Editor. If you double-click any RAW file icon, it has to open in the **Camera RAW** window within Elements rather than opening inside the **Quick**, **Guided**, or **Expert** workspaces (double-clicking any JPEG, TIFF, PNG, or PSD file will open it directly in **Quick** or **Expert** mode).



Profile: Color
White balance: As Shot
Temperature 0
Tint 0
Exposure +1.25
Contrast 0
Highlights +15
Shadows -16
Whites 0
Blacks -31
Clarity 0
Vibrance +21
Saturation 0
Depth: 8 Bits/Channel

Camera RAW utility: This is Camera RAW 12.3, the latest version of Adobe's RAW processing software. Double-click any RAW file and this application is what opens—in fact, for some photographers, this is the only software that they ever need to use to make their images look great. Clicking **Open Image** (bottom right-hand side) closes the **Camera RAW** window and takes it into the main **Quick** or **Expert** workspace, where it can be further edited or saved in a more usable file format than RAW, such as Photoshop, Tiff, or JPEG. If you make an edit, then click **Done**, Elements saves your changes automatically in a separate file—a bit like a set of instructions—so that when that same file is opened again, it comes back with all your changes. If that file gets lost or deleted, it simply reverts to its original, unedited state.



Profile: Color
White balance: As Shot
Temperature: 0
Tint: 0
Exposure: +1.25
Contrast: 0
Highlights: +15
Shadows: -16
Whites: 0
Blacks: -31
Clarity: 0
Vibrance: +21
Saturation: 0
Depth: 8 Bits/Channel

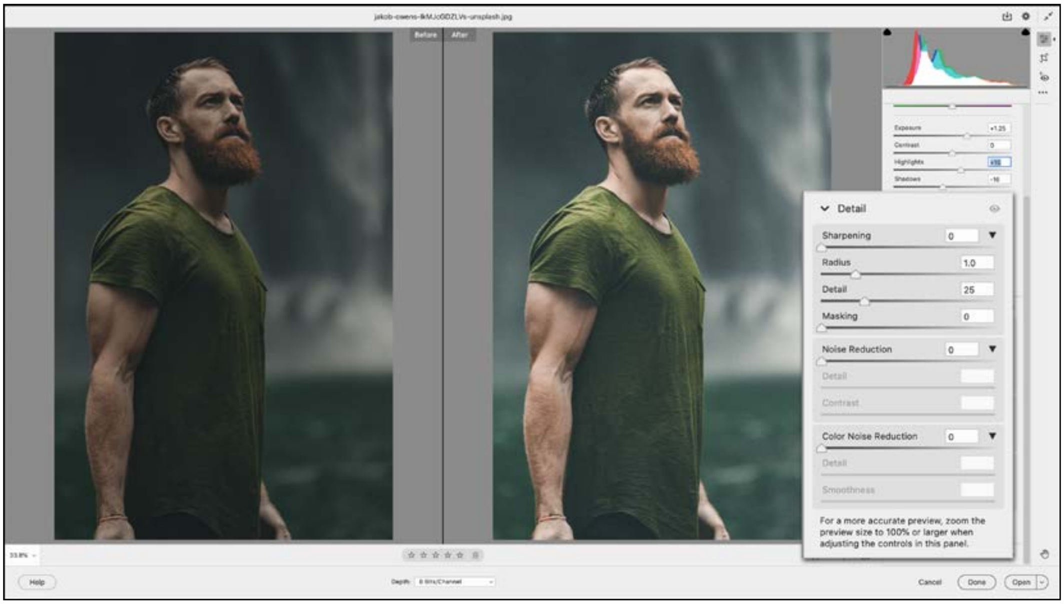
Edit the file: In Camera RAW, photographers can start with the **Edit** tab (here, enlarged on the right-hand side of the screen) to edit **White Balance**, plus make adjustments to **Exposure** (brightness) and **Contrast**. Other adjustments include: **Highlights**, **Shadows**, **Blacks**, and **Whites**, **Clarity** (an increase of the mid-tone contrast levels), **Vibrance** (which delivers a boost to weaker-looking color in the file), and, of course, **Saturation**, a slider that boosts all the colors in the file across its entire spectrum. Set this to a negative value and the file eventually turns black and white. Camera RAW 12.3 has been simplified in that the previous **Edit** and **Detail** tabs have been amalgamated into just the one menu, making the workflow somewhat easier to follow.

Sharpening should be the last step in the editing process and is essentially only undertaken when you know how the image is to be used. For example, different amounts of sharpening are applied to images that are to be printed or uploaded to social media. We generally add about 25% more sharpening to files that are to be printed because the print process of ink on paper produces a slightly softer-looking result.

And perversely, once the sharpening effect is added to the image, you might see more digital noise, which can be very annoying visually, so Elements incorporates not one, but two noise reduction filters, **Luminance Noise** reduction and **Color Noise** reduction, in the **Camera RAW** edit workflow.

Tip:

Don't forget to keep your copy of Elements updated so that the RAW processor can read and edit RAW files from the latest camera models released. If you are not sure if you have the latest version of Camera RAW, navigate to **Help>Updates** to check.

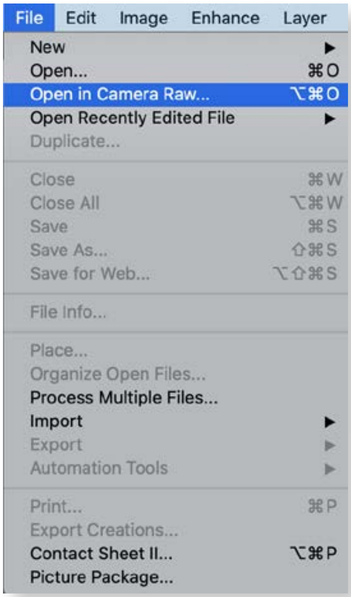

Before
After
Detail
Help
Cancel
Done
Open

Exposure +1.25
Contrast 0
Shadows -16

Sharpening 0
Radius 1.0
Detail 25
Masking 0
Noise Reduction 0
Color Noise Reduction 0

For a more accurate preview, zoom the preview size to 100% or larger when adjusting the controls in this panel.

Sharpen the file: Once you're happy with those processes, you can sharpen the file using the **Detail** tab. This deals with sharpening and noise reduction. The reason these two features are at the end of the processing list is simple: there's no point in sharpening a picture if it's too dark or garishly colored because you won't be able to see the sharpening action effectively. Get the tones and color right first, then apply sharpening.


File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
New ▶
Open... ⌘O
Open in Camera Raw... ⌥⌘O
Open Recently Edited File ▶
Duplicate...
Close ⌘W
Close All ⌥⌘W
Save ⌘S
Save As... ⇧⌘S
Save for Web... ⌥⇧⌘S
File Info...
Place...
Organize Open Files...
Process Multiple Files...
Import ▶
Export ▶
Automation Tools ▶
Print... ⌘P
Export Creations...
Contact Sheet II... ⌥⌘P
Picture Package...

Tip:

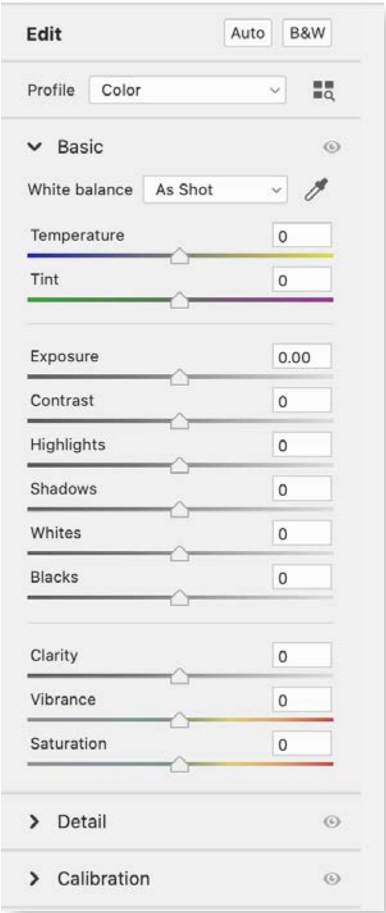
You can also force non-RAW files such as JPEGs or Tiffs to open in the Camera RAW processing window by choosing the **File>Open in Camera RAW** command first, allowing you to use RAW features on non-RAW files.

Even humble JPEG images can benefit from this feature. I do this quite a lot so I can use the excellent **Unsharp Mask** and **Noise Reduction** features, which I find work better than the ones located under the Photo Editor workspace's **Filter** drop-down menu.

In Detail: the Edit Basic tab

This section includes a more detailed description of what the many Camera RAW tools offer the photographer. To achieve significant changes and improvements to your images, concentrate on the following:

- **White Balance**: Using this, you can easily reset your white balance setting to whatever you need (that is, reset from **Shady** to **Daylight**, **Tungsten**, **Flash**, or even back to **Auto**). It also allows you to refine the color using the blue/yellow or magenta/green sliders.
- **Exposure**: This is also called brightness. It's used to brighten/darken the initial exposure if needed. (Note: this does not recover tones if the file is grossly over- or underexposed).
- **Contrast**: Quite different from **Exposure**. **Contrast** darkens the darker parts of the file while lightening the lighter parts of the image, resulting in fewer midtones. Use it to add visual *punch* to your images. Too much contrast loses valuable details in the shadows and highlights—keep an eye on the RGB values in those marginal tonal areas.



Profile: Color
White balance: As Shot
Temperature: 0
Tint: 0
Exposure: 0.00
Contrast: 0
Highlights: 0
Shadows: 0
Whites: 0
Blacks: 0
Clarity: 0
Vibrance: 0
Saturation: 0

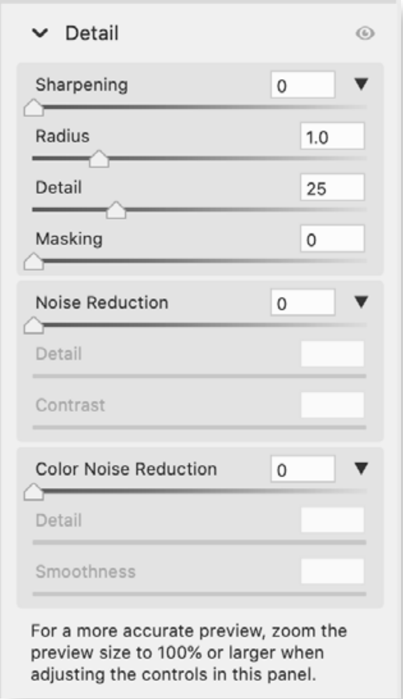
- **Highlights/Shadows/Whites/Blacks**: Separate and adjust those tonal zones using these four sliders. They allow you to increase/decrease contrast and boost the sharpness without the need for creating time-consuming masks or selections. These sliders can make a significant improvement to almost any file.
- **Clarity**: This slider increases the mid-tone contrast and produces a **dramatic result** with little effort. **Warning**: too much *clarity* is not a good look, but just enough can add a much-needed boost to the tones in almost any image; too much and you'll lose valuable shadow and highlight detail.
- **Vibrance**: Increases the richness in colors that are not so colorful, while, amazingly, doing little to enhance already bright color in the rest of the file. It's a great color-boosting tool, especially for portraits (as in skin tones) and landscapes.
- **Saturation**: Boosts the values of all the colors in the file, regardless of their current intensity, often producing what I call *candy-colored*, over-cooked results. A minus value reverts the color image to black and white. Use with some caution.

In Detail: Edit Detail (sharpening)

Sharpening is all about contrast—and in particular, edge contrast. If you make the darks go darker and the lights go a bit lighter, you add contrast—and the image appears clearer and sharper. A little sharpening can even make a (slightly) shaky-looking shot appear a bit clearer, and it can make an already clear image look really stunning.

It's also very important to sharpen for specific output requirements. Sharpening for print is different to sharpening for social media. It's even slightly different for different types of paper stock (such as glossy or matte) because each has a varied absorbency characteristic.

The **Detail** (**Sharpening**, or more correctly, **Unsharp Masking**) tab offers some adjustments that don't make a lot of sense until you understand how a sharpening *mask* actually works:



Detail

Sharpening 0

Radius 1.0

Detail 25

Masking 0

Noise Reduction 0

Detail

Contrast

Color Noise Reduction 0

Detail

Smoothness

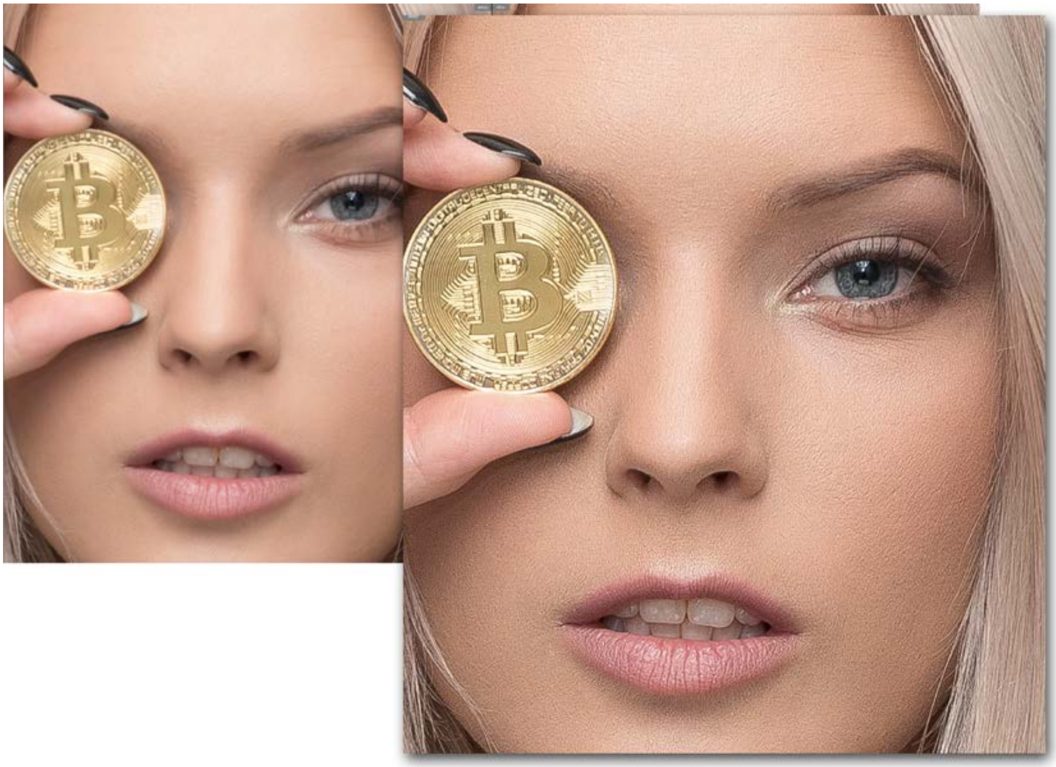
For a more accurate preview, zoom the preview size to 100% or larger when adjusting the controls in this panel.

- **Amount**: Adds the amount of sharpening effect to the file. Set it to `100` and move on to refine the look by tweaking **Radius**, **Detail**, and **Masking**.
- **Radius**: The sharpening process looks for **edges of contrast** to which it applies its effect. The radius dictates how far, either side of the found edge, it looks for that contrast difference. A setting of 1.0 to 1.5 pixels works well.
- **Detail**: This is used to emphasize the found **edge detail** in the image. Hold down the *Alt/Opt* key when shifting this slider to see the precise edge detail being added to the image.
- **Masking**: This feature should be under **Amount**, not at the bottom of this list. If you hold down the *Alt/Opt* key, then shift the **Masking** slider, you'll see a black and white mask appear onscreen (*see the screenshot on page 11*). Anything that's black is *protected* or masked, so no sharpening is added. Everything white is not masked and is sharpened accordingly.

By adding a **mask,** in this case set to a value of `86`, I have limited the effect of the sharpening to the white areas in the mask only. The black areas in the mask are opaque, and therefore protect that part of the image from change.

Tip:

Holding the *Alt/Opt* key down while sliding the **Exposure**, **Highlight**, **Shadow**, **Whites**, or **Blacks** sliders to the left or right displays the **gamut warning**, which highlights loss of detail due to overexposure or underexposure. This is an excellent viewing technique for assessing just how far to go with your brightening or darkening adjustments.

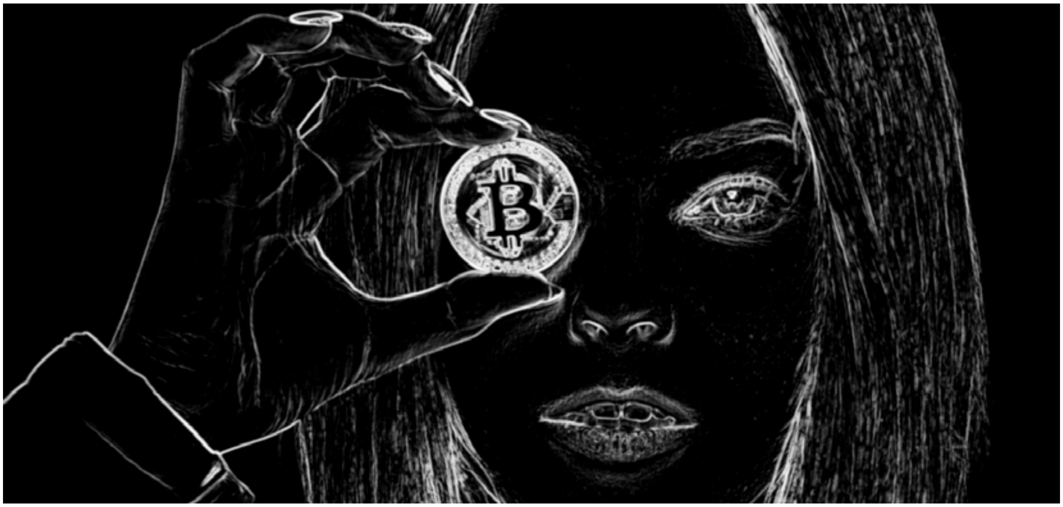


Never over-sharpen your work: By applying near full strength to all these sharpening settings, you'll see a lot of grittiness in the skin tones, especially if the ISO setting is high (for most cameras, that is over 800 ISO). Too much sharpening is never a good idea, because it can make a (portrait) subject appear older and less glamorous than they really are, as you see in the right-hand portrait example here. By using the mask, the program can concentrate on just the important bits of the face in this example and not get entangled with non-essential details. If you use the excellent **Smooth Skin** feature (under the **Enhance** menu) you'll note that the smoothness effect, even when applied at full strength, only affects the open areas of skin and not the eyes, nose, lips, eyebrows, and so on.

Another tip when sharpening is to avoid sharpening a file more than once. Layering sharpness in multiple passes can significantly damage a file and once an image is over-sharpened, it's very difficult to go back to the way the original looked.

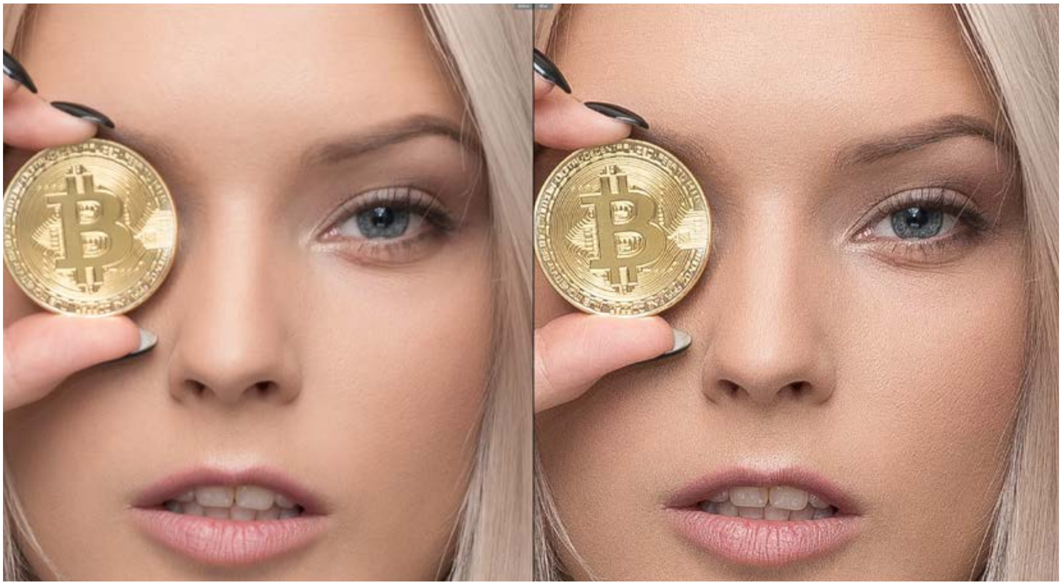
Tip:

Besides just sharpening an image file, a second, equally important thing to consider is the end result—what's the file going to be used for? Sharpening for print should be more aggressive than if it's just being displayed on social media – unfortunately, there's really no one setting that fits all when it comes to sharpening photographs.



Revealing the (unsharp) mask: By holding down the ***Alt/Opt*** key while shifting the **Masking** slider, Elements reveals the "mask" in stark black and white. The black areas are protected by the mask and the white areas are affected by any manipulation of the **Amount**, **Radius**, and **Detail** sliders. The idea in this portrait example is that you do not want to sharpen the pores in the skin—but you might want to accentuate the lips, nose, eyebrows, and hairline. In this example that's exactly what the Unsharp Mask does—it's a perfect tool for all portraitists but it's also effective for general photography.

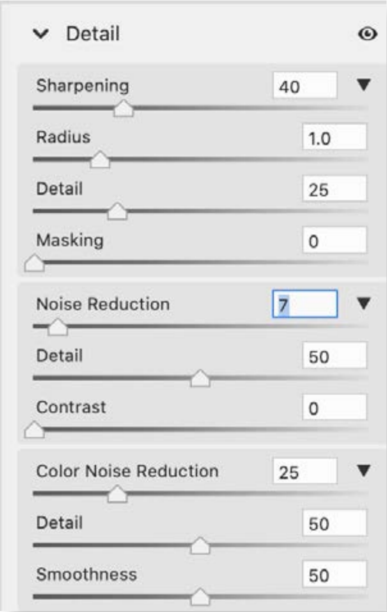
Below: The following example has been softened slightly using the unsharp mask—now it needs some of the excess noise levels reduced.



In Detail: Noise reduction

Digital noise is the bane of any photographer's life. It's caused (mostly) by using **high ISO settings** while shooting in poor light. Ironically, high ISO in good lighting usually has negligible noise effects. Smaller sensor cameras are particularly prone to this horrible side effect. Sharpening can also increase the look of added graininess in the file, so we have to use a little **Noise Reduction** to keep the result looking clean and clear of noise.

There are two kinds of noise: **Luminance** and **Color** noise. Both are horrible to look at, but perhaps color noise is worse:

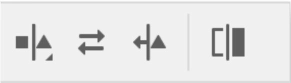


Detail

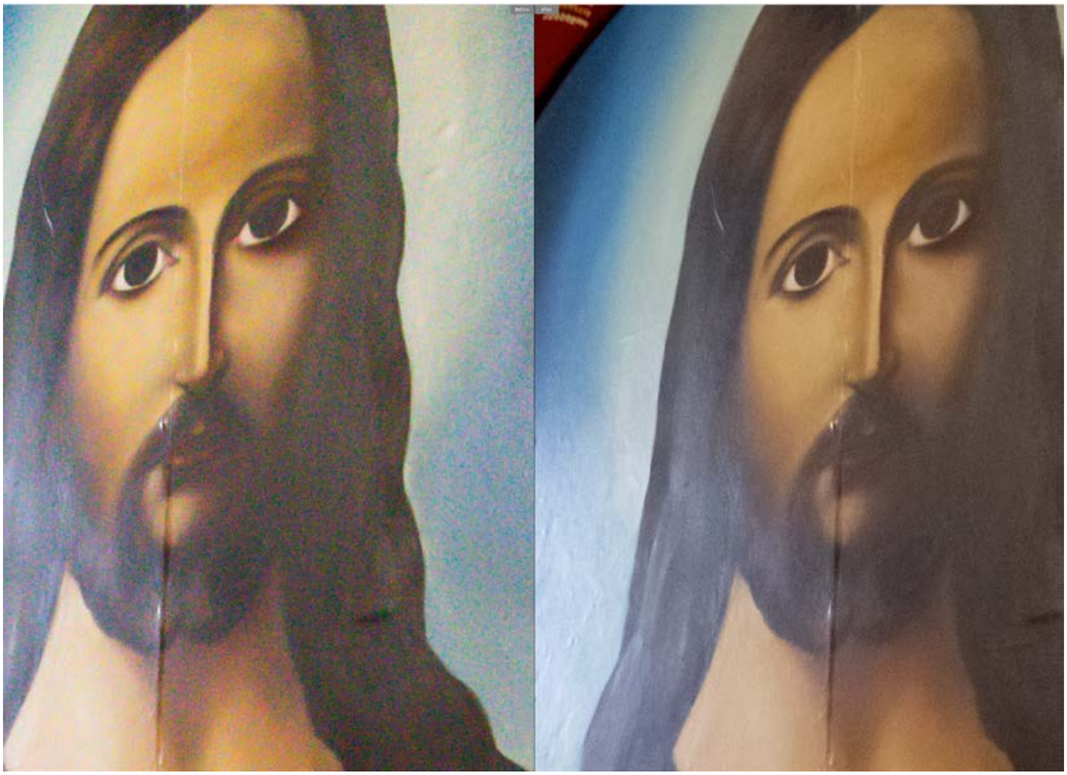
Sharpening 40
Radius 1.0
Detail 25
Masking 0
Noise Reduction 7
Detail 50
Contrast 0
Color Noise Reduction 25
Detail 50
Smoothness 50

- **Luminance** noise is just a graininess in the image, seen especially in the darker, underexposed parts of a scene. The higher the ISO rating, the more it appears. Underexposure will also show noise far more than if shooting in daylight. The **Luminance** noise slider softens the texture of the picture. Too much, and the image might take on a slightly surreal, airbrushed look. The **Luminance Detail** and **Luminance Contrast** sliders help re-introduce a bit of sharpness without adding more noise, but in practice, I find that they have only a limited influence on the end result.
- **Color** noise is significantly uglier than luminance noise because we, as photographers, are perhaps more used to film grain (present in the super-fast films of 20 years ago), but color specks in our digital pictures? This is an all-digital phenomenon that just never looks nice. Shifting the slider turns color noise into black and white noise, which, I think, looks far more acceptable that the color version.

The **Color Detail** and **Color Smoothness** sliders are there to help make the noise removal process less obvious. I use the Luminance and Color noise removal sliders all the time, but find the other four to be almost too subtle in their actions to have a visual benefit for my images.



Raw view modes: Pressing one of the three small tabs at the bottom right-hand side of the main window, you can view before and after versions of your labors. Once you begin editing, you can move the already-edited display to the left-hand window by pressing the second tab. The third tab allows you to transfer edits from the left to the right so you can carry on adding edits. The fourth icon gives you a straight before/after view.



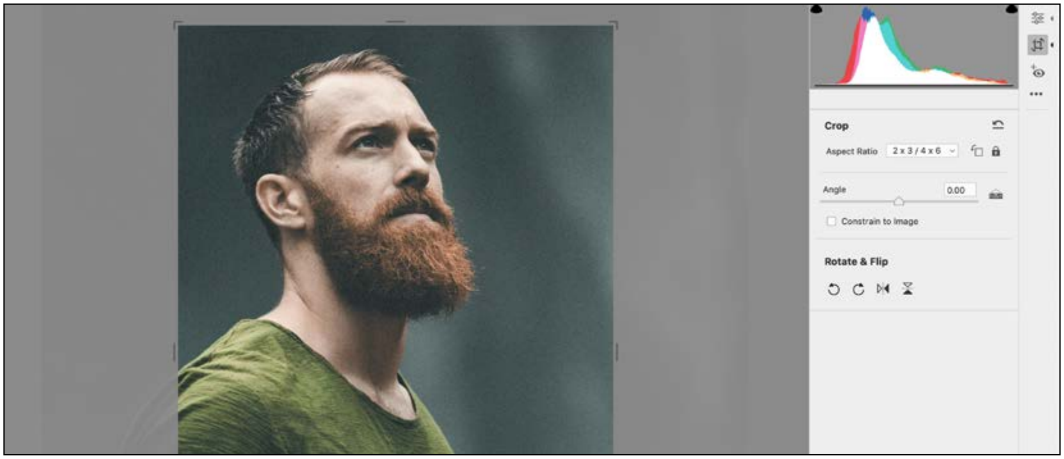
Noise reduction is the second part of the **Detail** panel and should only be used if you think the image requires it. Remember, any noise reduction filter action will end up softening the image. How much to add really depends on your requirements and how the image is to be exported, be it online or is destined for print. Here's a picture I photographed in a cave church in Ethiopia. I had to use a high ISO (3200) because it was so dark—and once the image was onscreen I could see it was suffering from a lot of color noise (left-hand image). I use Canon cameras and they seem to have a lot more color noise than equivalent Nikon cameras. In Elements' Camera RAW utility, I can then reduce that color noise to almost nothing. The fixed right-hand image is pretty good, although the tones are beginning to look a bit soft—the negative effects of too much filtering...

Tip:

It's interesting to note that over the years, file types (`.jpg`, `.tif`, `.psd`) have not changed much—apart from one new format, HEIF (high efficiency image format). This is supposed to contain twice as much image data than a same-sized `.jpg` file with no loss of quality and is currently the go-to image recording format for Apple smartphones. This is a derivation of the HEVC (video) format, which uses the highly successful H.265 codec. Adobe Photoshop Elements is fully compatible with HEIF and HEVC files from the 2020 version onwards.

Other features

Camera RAW is not just all about making your images lighter or darker, or more colorful. It's packed with an entire editing suite of tools, features, and processes all designed to make the job of editing images that much more streamlined and professional. Features include cropping, histogram adjustments, tonal information, over- and underexposure, as well as a sophisticated Profile Browser for applying some awesome color and mono looks:

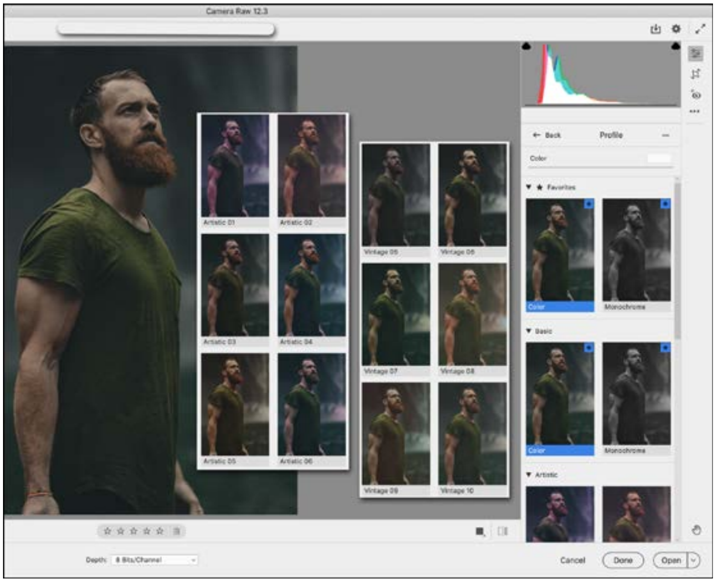

Crop
Rotate & Flip

Aspect Ratio 2 x 3 / 4 x 6

Angle 0.00

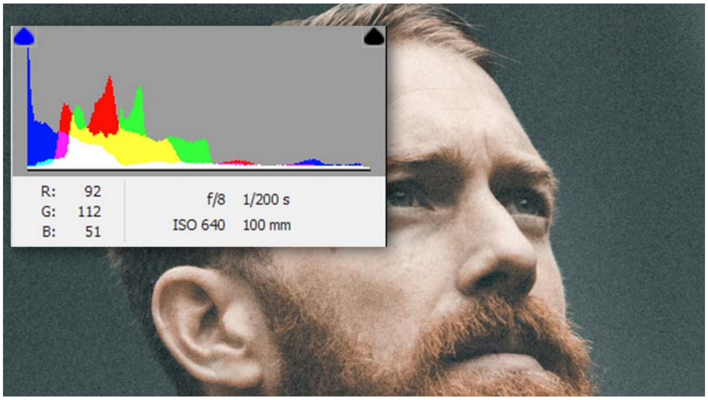
☐ Constrain to Image

Cropping: One of the many advantages to using RAW files is this: once the image has been cropped, the RAW file still retains **all the original pixels**—meaning it's easy to go back to it and re-crop - pixels are **never discarded**. The nature of the edit is recorded either in the file itself or in a "sidecar `.xmp`" file (which is little more than a text file). Make another change to the image and a new set of instructions is recorded. Delete the `.xmp` file and the RAW file reverts back to its unedited form.


Camera Raw 12.3
Artistic 01
Artistic 02
Artistic 03
Artistic 04
Artistic 05
Artistic 06
Vintage 05
Vintage 06
Vintage 07
Vintage 08
Vintage 09
Vintage 10
Back
Profile
Color
Favorites
Color
Monochrome
Basic
Color
Monochrome
Artistic
Cancel
Done
Open

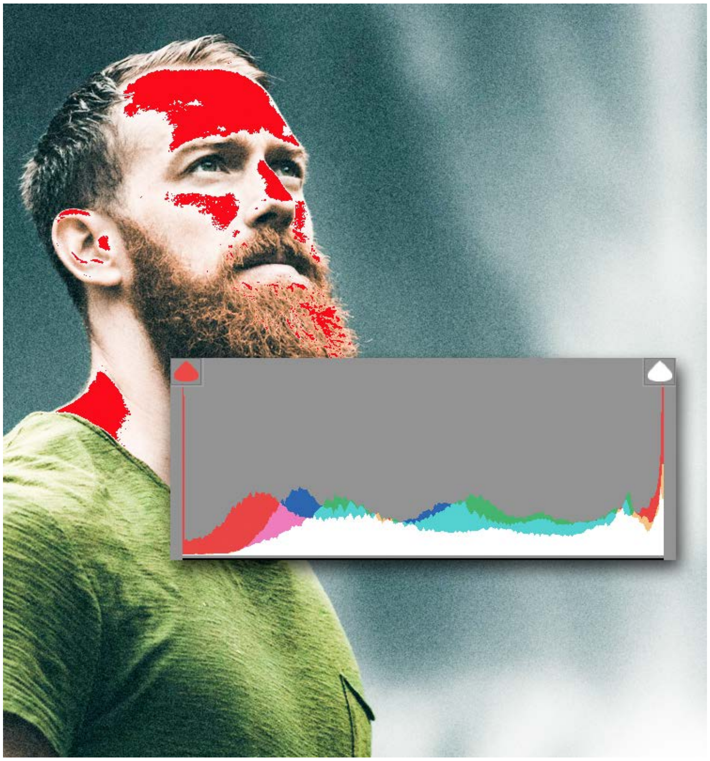
Depth: 8 Bits/Channel

Expanded view of the Profile Browser: This houses a comprehensive color management and special effects feature located just beneath the histogram window. Click the tiny Profile Browser button, to the right-hand side of the **Profile** drop-down menu, to view the entire selection of RAW profiles in Elements. As mentioned earlier, you might decide that this is too complicated and just go with the Adobe defaults. (Note that these profiles can also be applied to JPEG files.)

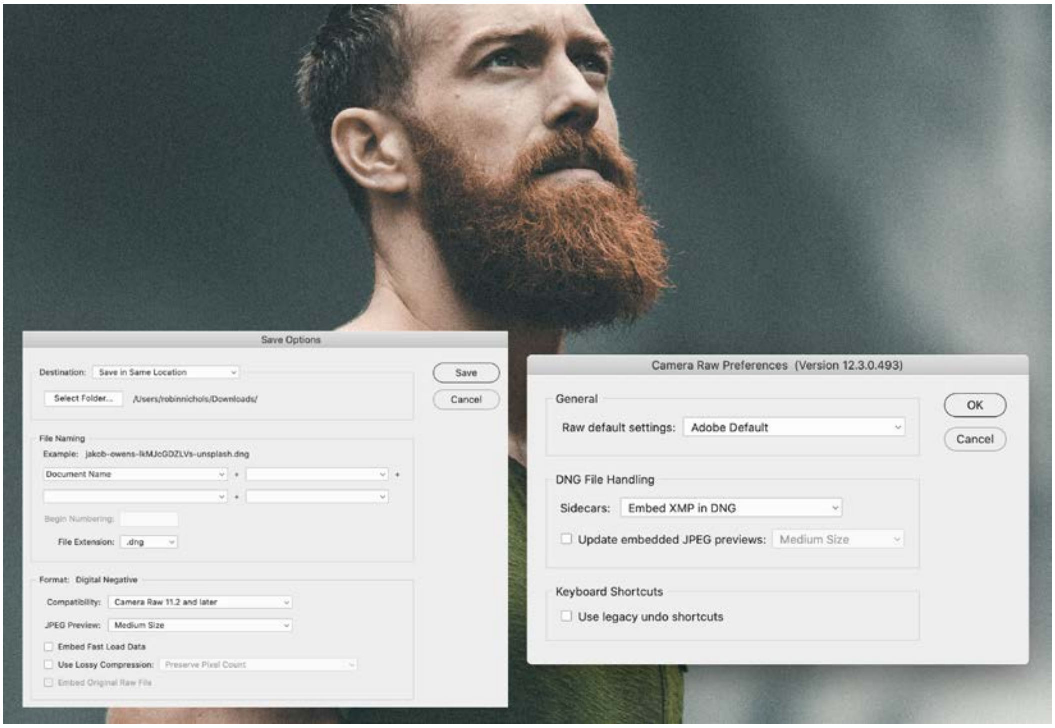

R: 92
G: 112
B: 51
f/8 1/200 s
ISO 640 100 mm

The **histogram** is often overlooked. This small window displays the distribution of tones in any image, with shadows and blacks on the left-hand side, and whites and highlights on the right-hand side, making it easy to see, at a glance, whether the image is over- or underexposed.

Use this readout to check the **camera shooting settings** (ISO, aperture, shutter speed, and the **focal length of the lens**). A useful feature of the histogram is its RGB values readout, here reading R: 92, G: 112, B: 51. Move the cursor over any part of the image to see how dark or light it really is, as an RGB value. Zero indicates you can't see any detail, while 255 means that it's so white (overexposed) you can't see any detail there either. This measurement bypasses the accuracy of the screen display (which might be wrong). What it displays is an accurate measurement of brightness levels in the file, so it can be used to assess the influence of your editing on the file.



The histogram keeps on giving: By clicking either, or both, of the triangles at the top left and top right of the histogram window, you can switch on the **Shadow** and **Highlight** warning feature. If the image is over-brightened or over-darkened, you'll see a warning color highlighting the affected tones. In the example of the purple flower image, you can clearly see that the highlights are red, indicating **dramatic overexposure**. Like the RGB value display, this can be an invaluable and instant visual feedback tool on a monitor that might not be properly calibrated.



Destination: Save in Same Location
/Users/robinnichols/Downloads/
Example: jakob-owens-lkMJcGDZLVs-unsplash.dng
Document Name
Begin Numbering:
File Extension: .dng
Format: Digital Negative
Compatibility: Camera Raw 11.2 and later
JPEG Preview: Medium Size
☐ Embed Fast Load Data
☐ Use Lossy Compression: Preserve Pixel Count
☐ Embed Original Raw File

Raw default settings: Adobe Default
Sidecars: Embed XMP in DNG
☐ Update embedded JPEG previews: Medium Size
☐ Use legacy undo shortcuts

Camera Raw Save Options + Camera Raw Preferences: These two panels are opened from the top right-hand side of the Camera RAW main screen. **Save Options** offers the user choices as to where the edited file can be saved (if not back in the location it came from). You also use this panel to rename files, and even to change the saved format—to DNG (digital negative) format. **Preferences** is the panel that allows you to choose between saving your edits as an XMP file separate to the Raw file and saving in the Raw file itself—a safer option. I think most Elements users never even look at the features—you really don't need them unless you have a specific application for one of the features mentioned here.

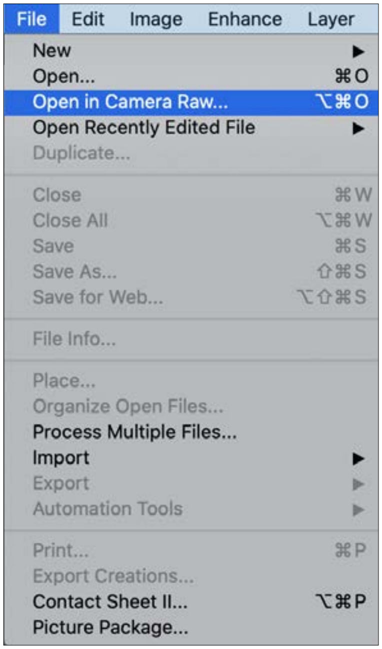
TIP:

Incidentally, if you have just bought a new camera and discover that Photoshop Elements will not recognize the camera's RAW files, don't panic. There's always a lag between the release of a new camera (and therefore a new RAW format) and the updating of third-party software capable of reading such new files. If this happens to you, simply download the free DNG converter software from Adobe's site, and convert your as yet unreadable RAW files to DNG format, then open them in Elements.

10 ways to open a photo for editing

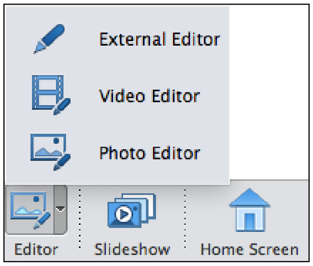
You can choose one or more ways to get an image from the Organizer into any of the three editing modes to start creating magic:

- Right-click any thumbnail in **Organizer** and choose **Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor** (highlighted in red in the following screenshot).
- Select a thumbnail in **Organizer**, then select the **Photo Editor** tab from the **Editor** button popup at the base of the page (inset, at right).
- Click/select a thumbnail in **Organizer**, then drag it directly into the edit window (into **Quick** and **Expert** modes).
- Click the **Open** tab (top left-hand side in **Expert**), then navigate to the image files. Double-click the filename/icon.
- Choose **File>Open recently edited file** in the **Quick**, **Guided**, and **Expert** edit modes.
- Drag an image (icon) from a Windows/Mac **Finder** window into the **Quick** or **Expert** edit window.
- Use the **File>Open** menu command.
- Use the *Ctrl/Cmd + O* keyboard shortcut.
- Click/select a thumbnail in **Organizer**, then press *Ctrl/Cmd + I* (opens in **Expert** mode).
- Using *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + O* (**Quick** or **Expert** modes), navigate to the appropriate RAW, JPEG, or Tiff file, and click **Open** to bring it into the **Camera RAW** window.


File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
New ▶
Open... ⌘O
Open in Camera Raw... ⌥⌘O
Open Recently Edited File ▶
Duplicate...
Close ⌘W
Close All ⌥⌘W
Save ⌘S
Save As... ⇧⌘S
Save for Web... ⌥⇧⌘S
File Info...
Place...
Organize Open Files...
Process Multiple Files...
Import ▶
Export ▶
Automation Tools ▶
Print... ⌘P
Export Creations...
Contact Sheet II... ⌥⌘P
Picture Package...

Right-clicking any thumbnail in the Organizer pops out a contextual menu, as shown on the left—choose **Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor** to take that thumbnail into the edit workspace. Watch that you don't accidentally hit the one beneath this—that's for the video editor.

Right: Don't miss the pop-up tab at the bottom of the Organizer to access three editing applications: **Photo Editor**, **Video Editor**, and **External Editor**.


External Editor
Video Editor
Photo Editor
Editor
Slideshow
Home Screen

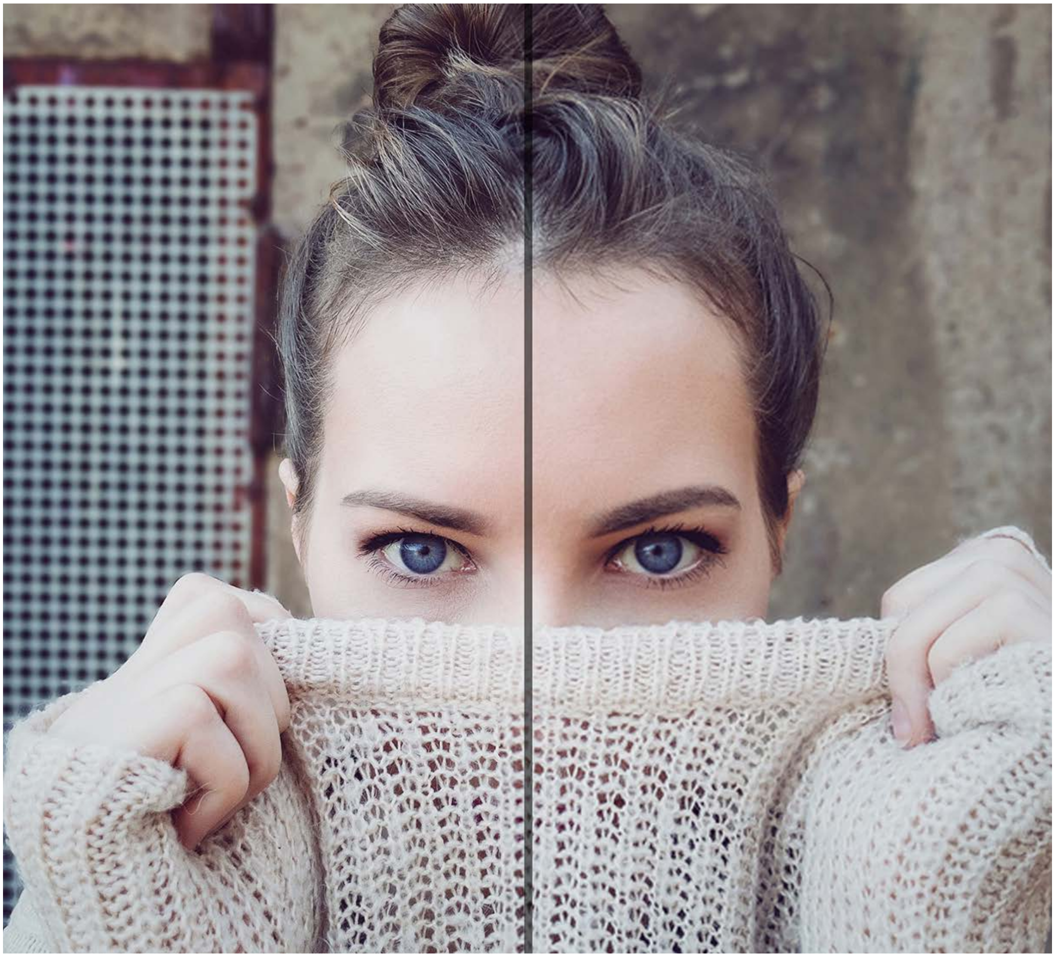
Understanding picture resolution

Resolution, and in particular, **photo resolution**, is a feature that confuses many. This shouldn't be an issue because the resolution of a camera is a **fixed quantity** and only changes when you physically choose a different picture size in the camera menu—or if you **crop the file** on a computer.

To be pedantic, resolution is not only about the number of pixels in the camera, although this is important. Resolution is also influenced by the quality of the **glass elements** in the lens, the camera's image stabilization technology (indirectly), and the shooting technique employed by the photographer.

The biggest point of confusion arises from the way the number of **pixels per inch** (**ppi**) can vary widely from camera to camera. (In the printing world, **dots per inch** (**dpi**) is the same as ppi, which in turn is the same as **lines per inch**.)

Different resolutions = different viewing sizes: Demonstrating resolution can be daunting—the web is a low-resolution medium and unsuited for exhibiting high-resolution files. The only difference between these two images is that one is a lower resolution than the other (5Mp compared to 32Mp). Clearly, the more pixels in the image, the larger it can be displayed, both onscreen and in print, while looking to have the same clarity.



Of course, in photography we have the tools to crop and enlarge and resample files—all of which can make it hard to keep track of quality. If I were to enlarge a small 5Mp file to the same size as a 32Mp file then print it, this is what you'd see: a very clear left-hand portrait and a soft-focus, low-resolution result in the right-hand portrait. The latter has gone soft because there are not enough pixels in the file to fill the area it has been enlarged to. You'd think that in this case you'd see the pixels, but digital print technology adds a feature called dithering when enlarging image files, and in particular when printing, so the sharp edges of the pixels are blurred slightly to blend the expected raggedness. This works well for small enlargements but in this case, all that happens is that the resulting image looks soft.

Tip:

When printing, you need all the pixels you can get. A 24Mp RGB file, for example, will print clearly up to A3 and maybe even bigger if the image quality is exceptional. However, if I were to crop a small bit out of that same file, then enlarge it to A3, the result would be very soft because there would not be enough pixels to provide clear resolution.

To make matters somewhat more confusing, different cameras produce different dpi or dot per inch characteristics. For example, a 24Mp Canon might produce files that, when examined in Elements, are set to 180dpi, while a 24Mp Nikon might have its files set to 300dpi. What's the difference? Actually there's no real difference because both have the **same number of pixels**, and are therefore the same resolution—the Canon's files are just programmed (in the camera software) to be spread out over a larger physical area—but once the Canon image is set (using Elements' **Image Size** feature) to 300dpi, it will come out the same size as the Nikon. That dpi number is just an arbitrary figure set by the camera designers—it can be changed at any time.

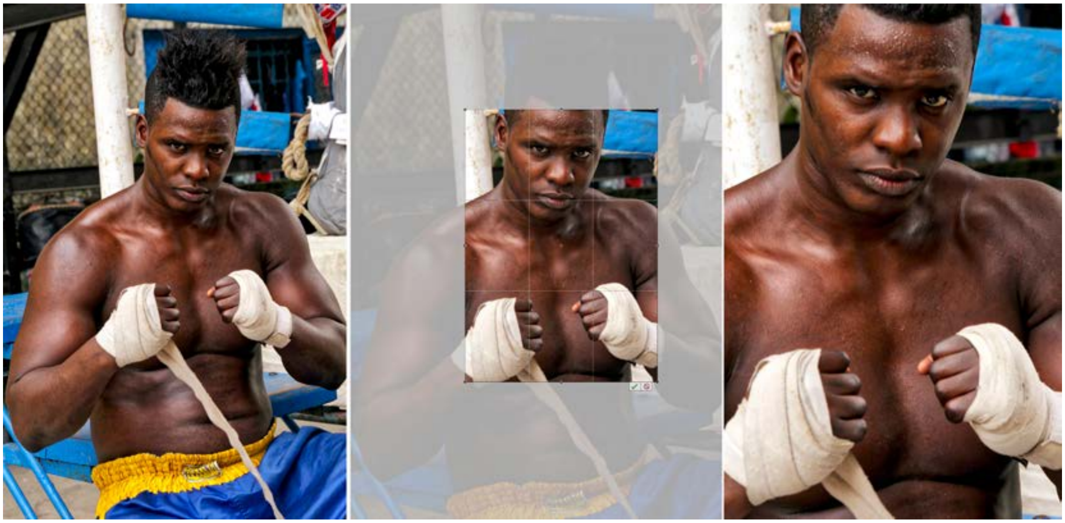
Tip:

There's little to no advantage in printing an image at a resolution higher than 300 dpi because, at that setting, the pixels reproduce the look of continuous tone (that is, no pixels are actually visible). Once it is a continuous tone print, adding more pixels does not increase quality – it just has the effect of slowing down the print process (because the file is that much larger and takes longer to transfer from computer to printer). When resampling, software such as Elements can also add dithering, a process where pixels are blended into each other to give the effect of smooth tone—inkjet printers are especially good at this. You don't necessarily choose it; it's just part of the process. Although a 300 dpi file produces a smoother, continuous tone, because of this dithering process, even files set to 100 dpi can look very good.

Cropping for better composition

Cropping is an editing feature that allows you to trim off parts of the image that you don't like – it provides an opportunity to recompose the shot after it has been taken.

However, one vital point to remember is that cropping **discards pixels** and therefore lowers file resolution. I love photographing birds, but unfortunately, they always tend to be too far away, even with a 400 mm telephoto lens, so I have to crop the edges off the file to make the subject appear larger. If I crop 50% from a photo, it then looks as if I have shot the subject with an 800 mm lens, not my regular 400 mm lens. Cropping has saved me a lot of money in my not having to buy an even more powerful (and thus very expensive) lens. But the inevitable compromise is that, in that example, I have lost half the pixels in the file—no problem if I only ever post the image online, but a restriction if I hope to have it printed large.



Left frame: This screenshot shows the image full frame.

Middle frame: I have dragged the **Crop** tool over the boxer to go in close over his face and fists—the gray overlay indicates this portion of the file (about 70% of it) will be lost once I click the green OK button located on the cropping overlay.

Right hand frame: The final cropped result looks pretty good but once this is enlarged to the same size as the original it does appear a little soft—because I have chopped out 70% of the pixels—and then expect it to look really good same size. If this were destined for online use, there'd be no loss of quality because both versions have more than enough pixels to display clearly at 72dots per inch (screen resolution).

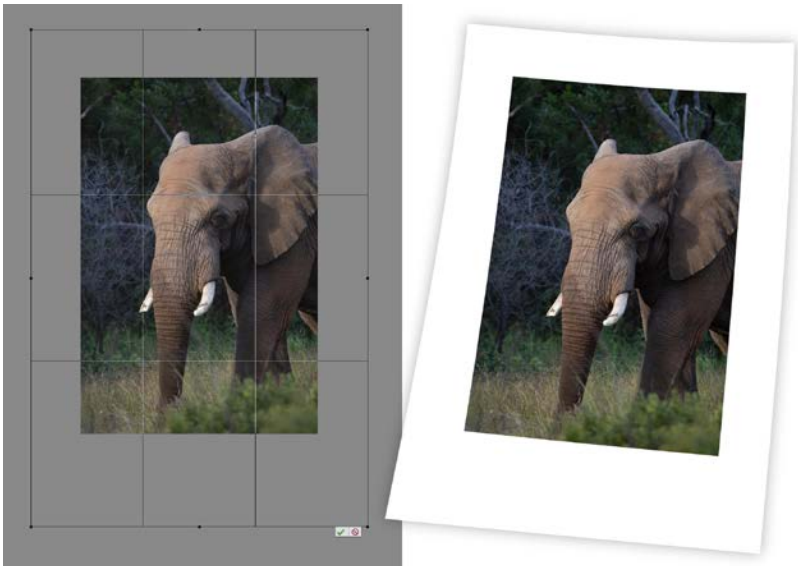
Inset: Printed at this size, the cropped version appears as sharp as the original, albeit somewhat smaller.

Crop is one of the easiest tools to use. Here's how it's used:

Step one: In **Quick** or **Expert** mode, press *C* on the keyboard to engage the **Crop** tool, or select it from the toolbar (make sure it's the **Crop** tool and not one of the other tools on the same peg: the **Cookie Cutter** or **Crop Perspective** tools).

Step two: Click and drag the cursor anywhere over the image. This draws a **Crop Marquee**. When you press the green check mark on the bottom of the marquee, the parts of the image inside that marquee are kept, while the outer pixels are discarded. Clicking the red symbol cancels the cropping operation, as does pressing the *Esc* key.

Step three: If your initial foray is not the shape, size, or rotation you want, release the mouse and grab one of the edge handles (the little square tags in the center, or corners, of the marquee) and adjust the proportions of the crop edges. Note that if you slide the cursor over the edge of any corner to the outside of the marquee, the cursor changes from a **diagonal shape** to a **curved shape**, meaning that you can now **rotate** the entire crop marquee. Use this to crop and rotate at the same time, for example, to get a horizon level. If you find this fiddly, try the **Straighten** tool first (see the *Straightening horizons* section later in this chapter), then crop it.



Instant photo framing: One neat feature of the **Crop** tool is its ability to add a border to any image. To do this, all that's needed is for you to first drag the crop marquee across the entire image. An easy way to do this is to drag from outside the image (over the pasteboard area) diagonally to the opposite corner. Now that the entire image is covered by the Crop tool, drag it a second time over the pasteboard—as seen above and on the left. The crop marquee spreads out away from the picture edges. When you have the desired width and height, click the green check mark and Elements adds pixels to the image. Note that the resulting border color is based on the current **background color**. If you need a different color border, the background **Color Picker** must be chosen before the **Crop** tool is engaged.

Elements has a number of excellent additional cropping features to help the compositional process, such as **Rule of Thirds** and a **Grid** overlay. These are included to help you recompose shots into more dynamic-looking compositions. There are also four **preset crop shapes offered as potential cropping suggestions**—click the image thumbnails in the **Crop Options** panel to initiate them.

If you intend to crop your files to a specific print dimension, use the preset drop-down menu in the **Options** panel. It offers classic print sizes such as 4 x 6 inches, 5 x 7 inches, and 10 x 8 inches, handy when you have a lot of files to crop to the same size. But if you are cropping to a size that's different to the presets, type the dimensions into the width and height fields, making sure you add `cm`, `px` or, `in` (centimeters/pixels/inches), after the width and height measurements; then, when you crop, it resets the resolution at the same time. And if the file happens to be smaller than what you have chosen to crop to (that is, a file from a low-resolution camera or smartphone), Elements adds pixels to the image to bring it up to size using a feature called **Resampling**. It might make the end result appear softer, but it works pretty well.

The **Crop** tool panel also features the **Cookie Cutter** tool, which I will deal with in *Chapter 6*, *Advanced Editing Techniques*.

Better Billboards
Are you in for the big fight tonight?

Proportional viewing: Ever wondered about the resolution seen on **freeway billboards**? As a rule, most of these images are the same resolution as a double-page spread in a glossy magazine. Sounds implausible—but it's all to do with **viewing distances**. We generally read a magazine at a distance of around two feet. A freeway billboard will be viewed at 50 feet, maybe more—and usually at speed. To achieve that immense size, billboards can be printed at a tenth of the resolution (dpi) of a magazine—about 30dpi—and still produce acceptable clarity. But get out of your car and approach the poster and you'll see that it is not nearly as sharp as it appears from the freeway. **Viewing distance is everything**. (Refer to the next section, *Resampling*, to read about how to add pixels to an image to make it significantly larger).

Resampling

As we mentioned in the *Cropping* section, **resampling** is the process of adding or subtracting pixels to any file to make it larger or smaller.

Now, you might think, if this is the case, then your dreams of producing very high-resolution files have just been answered. But there's a catch. Resampling is a mathematical algorithm that can be used to upsample or downsample files effectively, provided that the original is of the highest quality.

In practice this means that if you try to resample a 1 Mp file so it can be printed as a poster, it's not going to look very sharp. But if you start with a lot more image data – let's say, a 24 Mp file – this can be resampled to 30, 40, or 50 Mp with almost no loss of quality. It could go as high as 200 Mp before it really looks soft.

Further sharpening after the resampling process will help to reverse the softening that adding extra pixels might create. Also, bear in mind the viewing distance. We might hold an A4 print at arm's length to appreciate its quality, but for a poster, you'd probably stand six feet away to get the best view, and therefore would not be so aware of any softening due to resampling.

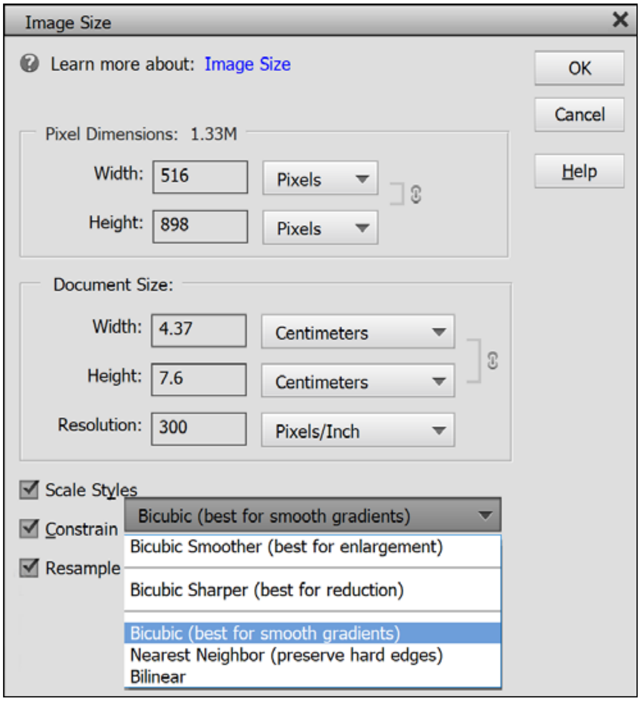


Image Size
Learn more about: Image Size
OK
Cancel
Help
Bicubic Smoother (best for enlargement)
Bicubic Sharper (best for reduction)
Bicubic (best for smooth gradients)
Nearest Neighbor (preserve hard edges)
Bilinear

Pixel Dimensions: 1.33M

Width: 516 Pixels

Height: 898 Pixels

Document Size:

Width: 4.37 Centimeters

Height: 7.6 Centimeters

Resolution: 300 Pixels/Inch

☑ Scale Styles

☑ Constrain

☑ Resample Bicubic (best for smooth gradients)

How do we enlarge (or reduce) the size of a file?

Follow these steps:

Step one: Open the file in Elements' **Expert** mode.

Step two: Open the **Image Size** feature (**Image>Resize**>**Image Size**).

Step three: Check the **Resample Image** box, at the bottom of this panel.

Step four: Select the resampling method from the drop-down menu at the base of the panel (see the following explanation to learn what each resampling method should be used for).

Step five: Click **OK** and watch as Elements resizes the file. Save the result.

There are several types of resampling offered:

- **Bicubic Smoother**: Best for enlarging a file
- **Bicubic Sharper**: Best for reducing the size of a file
- **Bicubic**: Good for producing smoother tonal gradients
- **Nearest Neighbor**: Perfect for upsizing hard-edged graphic images, such as the screen captures used in this book
- **Bilinear**: Far better than **Nearest Neighbor**, but still not quite as good as bicubic resampling

I'm taking a bit of a visual liberty with this illustration of a large format inkjet printer. However, if you start resampling with a very high-resolution file (let's say, shot with a Nikon D850, producing a 45 Mb file), it's entirely possible to resample the file several times larger, up to one gigabyte and higher.

> TIP:
>
> For best results do the following:
>
> Ensure the file is well exposed (that is, not too dark or light) and clear (that is, not blurred).
>
> Leave the sharpening process until after you have resampled the file.
>
> Upsampling works best if you keep the enlargement to between 10 and 50%. Any more than that and you'll notice it becoming softer.
>
> Once resampled, make adjustments to the brightness, contrast, and sharpness, if needed.

> TIP:
>
> While Elements' default resampling method (Bicubic) generally works well, choosing the specific Bicubic Smoother or Bicubic Sharper method should produce a better-looking result. Remember to reset your **Resample** method in the **Image Size** panel if you move on to resample hard-edged graphics. Resampling with the wrong method can lead to poor quality—usually in terms of overall sharpness.

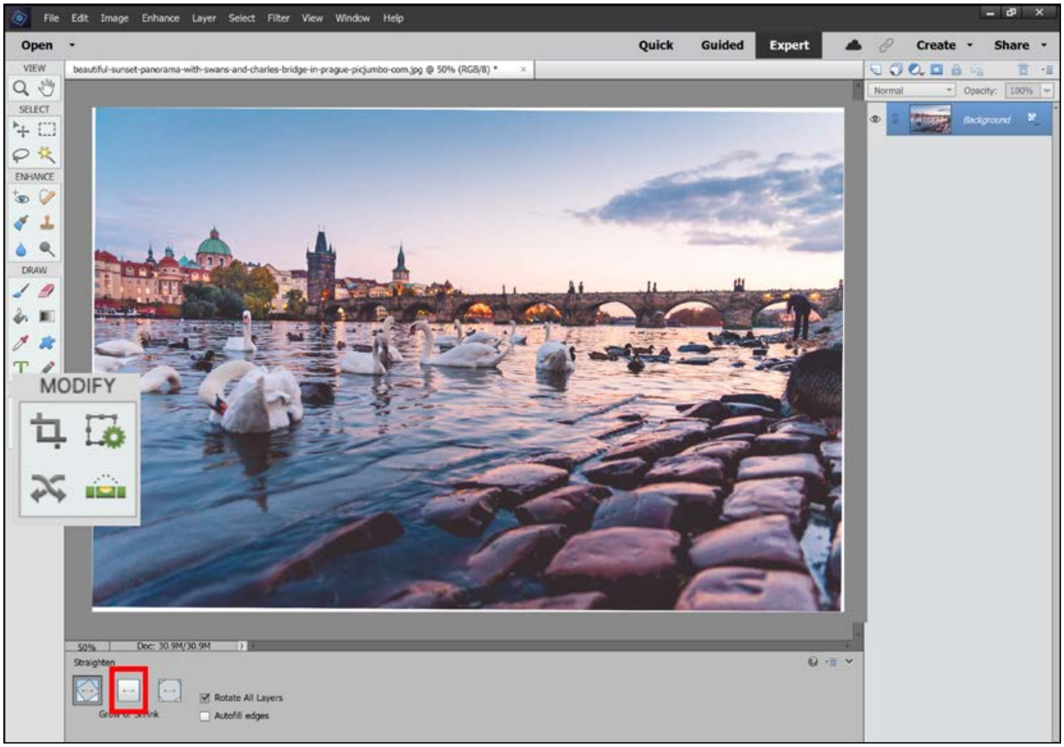
The Straighten tool

Alongside the **Crop** tool, I rate the **Straighten** tool highly. Few photographers can shoot a landscape, for example, and get the horizon 100% level. Many photographers, myself included, also have serious problems getting verticals, well, 100% vertical. Here's how this tool works:

Step one: Open an image that needs its horizon leveled.

Step two: Choose the **Straighten** tool (cunningly, its toolbar icon is a builder's spirit level).

Step three: Click once on the horizon and, while holding down the mouse button, drag the *elastic* line that appears from that first click point across the horizon and let go. You do not have to stretch the line along the entire horizon—a few inches is enough. The program immediately rotates the image to make this line the new horizon. If you get it wrong, **Undo** (*Ctrl*/*Cmd* + *Z*) and try again.


File Edit Image Enhance Layer Select Filter View Window Help
Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
beautiful-sunset-panorama-with-swans-and-charles-bridge-in-prague-picjumbo-com.jpg @ 50% (RGB/8) *
VIEW
SELECT
ENHANCE
DRAW
MODIFY
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Background
50%
Doc: 30.9M/30.9M
Straighten
Grow or Shrink

☑ Rotate All Layers
☐ Autofill edges

Trimming the rough bits: With the first option, if the image is rotated to straighten the horizon, pixels are added to the parts that overlap the pasteboard (seen here in white on each side of the image). These bits can be cropped off or, if you choose the second option here (highlighted in red) the software automatically crops it for you. Alternatively, you can check the **Autofill edges** option. This automatically fills the blank edges with pixels copied from inside the image. Clever stuff. If it's only a small amount of fill, the results are usually seamless, but the more space it has to fill, the more likely you are to see auto retouching errors.

Instant photo-fixing in the Organizer

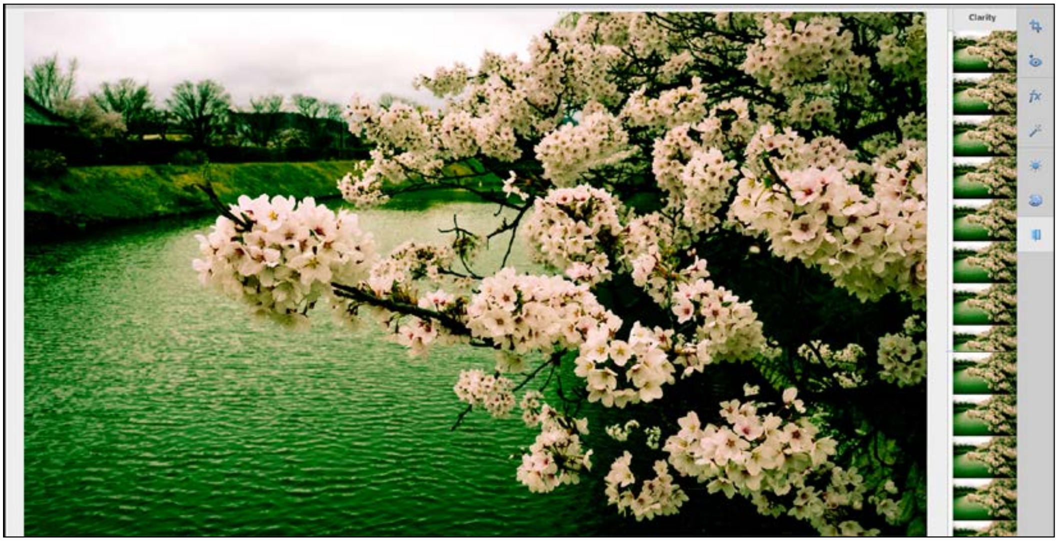
The **Instant Fix** feature found in Elements' Organizer is a good way to produce quick and highly visual effects without the need to transfer the file from the **Organizer** to the **Quick**, **Guided**, or **Expert** modes.

Here's how:

1. Find an image in **Organizer** that you'd like to edit.
2. Select it (click once).
3. Click the **Instant Fix** button, at the bottom of the page.
4. Use one or more of the tool or process icons that appear on the right-hand side of the screen.

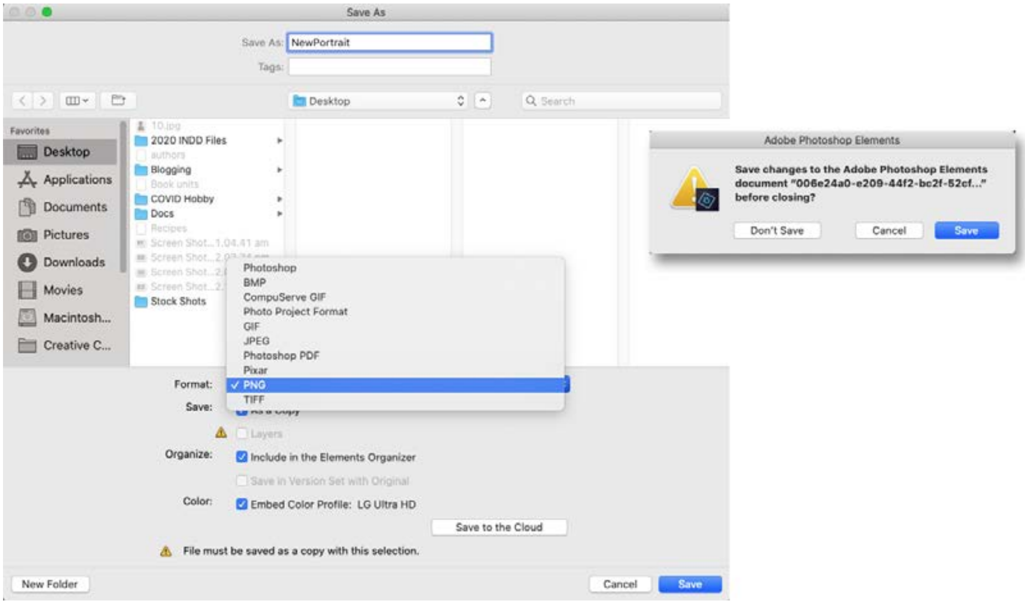
These are **Crop**, **Red Eye**, **Effects**, **Smart Fix**, **Light**, **Color**, and **Clarity**. You'll find that not all of them are *instant*. The **Crop** tool, for example, requires you to choose a crop ratio first, then position it over the appropriate part of the image, then resize it, if needed, before clicking the green check mark to execute the process. But I'm being pedantic.

Once you are happy with the result, click the **Save** button at the base of the page to apply your awesome edit to the file. I tend to save my files with a different name (that is, `cherryblossomFinal.jpg`) so that, months later, when I am looking for that very file, I can recognize it easily from its name.



Saving Files

It's important to note that, when saving JPEG, TIF, PSD, or PNG files, if you choose the **Save** option (**File>Save**), some software applications simply write the new file on top of the old one, effectively deleting the original and saving the (hopefully) improved new version instead. This isn't the case with Elements, as it always asks if it's **OK** to overwrite the previous version of this file—a face-saving feature in some cases.



Save As: NewPortrait

Tags:

Format: ✓ PNG

Save: ☑ As a Copy

☐ Layers

Organize: ☑ Include in the Elements Organizer

☐ Save in Version Set with Original

Color: ☑ Embed Color Profile: LG Ultra HD

File must be saved as a copy with this selection.

Save changes to the Adobe Photoshop Elements document "006e24a0-e209-44f2-bc2f-52cf..." before closing?

Save As
Desktop
Search
Favorites
Desktop
Applications
Documents
Pictures
Downloads
Movies
Macintosh...
Creative C...
10.jpg
2020 INDD Files
authors
Blogging
Book units
COVID Hobby
Docs
Recipes
Screen Shot...1.04.41 am
Screen Shot...2
Screen Shot...2
Screen Shot...2
Stock Shots
Photoshop
BMP
CompuServe GIF
Photo Project Format
GIF
JPEG
Photoshop PDF
Pixar
PNG
TIFF
Save to the Cloud
New Folder
Cancel
Save
Adobe Photoshop Elements
Don't Save
Cancel
Save

If you open a file, do nothing to it, then choose **File>Save** - nothing happens because there's nothing to save. If you make any kind of change to the file, then choose **File>Save** you'll see the **Save As** panel. It allows you to do the following:

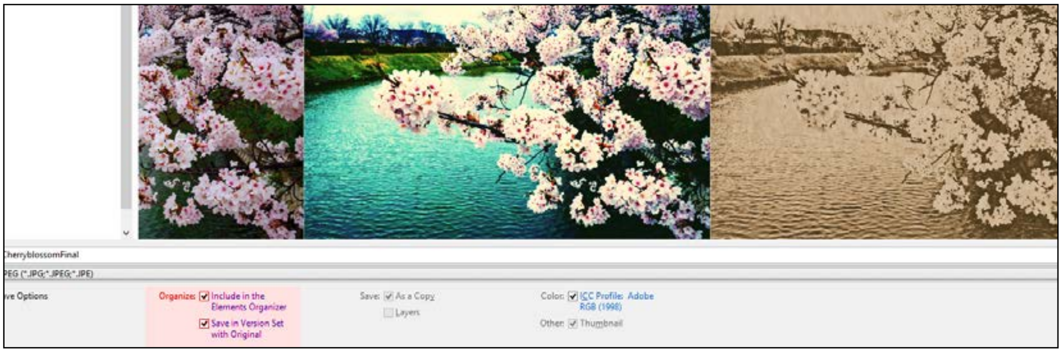
- Save your work.
- Change the file format.
- Include that file back into the Organizer.
- Save it as a copy (as in `NewPortrait copy.jpg`).
- Save it into a Version Set (see overleaf).
- Save it with a specific Color Profile.
- Save to the cloud (new with Elements 2021).

For added security, if you change anything in the file then quit Elements or try to close the file (*Ctrl/Cmd + W*), Elements throws up the warning panel (inset above) asking if you want to quit without saving.

Version sets

Other options in the **Save As** dialog window include **Save in Version Set with Original** and **Save as a Copy**. What the first feature does is save the new version of your (cherry blossom) shot with the original file for safe-keeping. In Organizer, you only see the original image, but if you right-click it, you can choose to see all the different versions you might have made from the original.

This is called a **Version Set**—single photos stacked into one file like a deck of cards. You can add more or delete exiting versions as you need. Everything is kept in the one file, saving screen space.



herryblossomFinal

PEG (*.JPG;*.JPEG;*.JPE)

ve Options

Organize: ☑ Include in the Elements Organizer
☑ Save in Version Set with Original

Save: ☑ As a Copy
☐ Layers

Color: ☑ ICC Profile: Adobe RGB (1998)

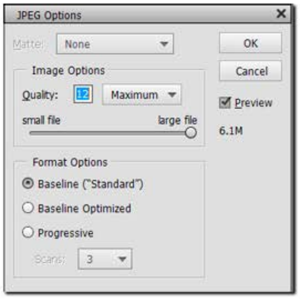
Other: ☑ Thumbnail

I like to experiment with all sorts of special effects—and there's more than enough potential to do this using Elements' **Effects** and **Adjustments** tools. So, Version Sets might be just the feature you need to keep all those variations on a theme safely stored in one file till you decide which one to use.

File Formats

JPEG format options:

Baseline is the most used compression option. **Baseline Optimized** produces a slightly smaller saved file using a different compression algorithm. **Progressive** is used specifically on larger web images. Rather than waiting a long time for the image to load, **Progressive** slowly displays the image, building it up with a number of scans (set through the menu). This was designed a long time ago when the fastest modems available were 28.8 kb/s.



Matte: None

Image Options

Quality: 12 Maximum

☑ Preview

6.1M

Format Options

● Baseline ("Standard")

○ Baseline Optimized

○ Progressive

Scans: 3

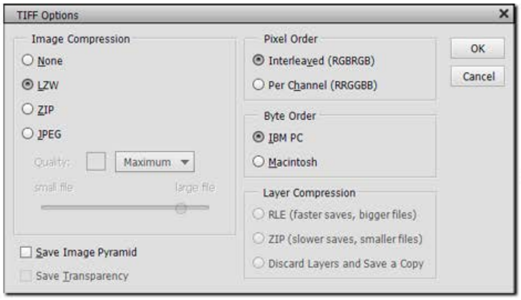


Image Compression

○ None

● LZW

○ ZIP

○ JPEG

Quality: Maximum

☐ Save Image Pyramid

☐ Save Transparency

Pixel Order

● Interleaved (RGBRGB)

○ Per Channel (RRGGBB)

Byte Order

● IBM PC

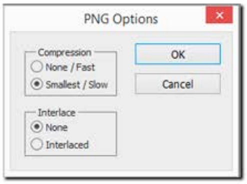
○ Macintosh

Layer Compression

○ RLE (faster saves, bigger files)

○ ZIP (slower saves, smaller files)

○ Discard Layers and Save a Copy



Compression

○ None / Fast

● Smallest / Slow

Interlace

● None

○ Interlaced

PSD (Photoshop) format:

No specific options for this excellent file format. Photoshop files are perfect if you are working with extras - masks, selections, multi-layered edits, text, and more. It's larger than a JPEG but smaller than a TIFF file.

TIFF format options:

Similar to the **Progressive** option in the JPEG panel, many of the options in this panel are redundant because the internet is lightning fast and storage drives are incredibly affordable. I generally use the **None** option for compression, but if you really need to save on space, use the **LZW** compression option. This is a lossless compression that reduces file size by about 25%, with no loss of quality. ZIP and JPEG compression is no longer supported in some applications. **Pixel Order** needs to be **Interleaved**. **Per Channel** is not supported in Organizer. **Byte Order** is not relevant, as Macs and PCs can work seamlessly with each other's files.

PNG format options:

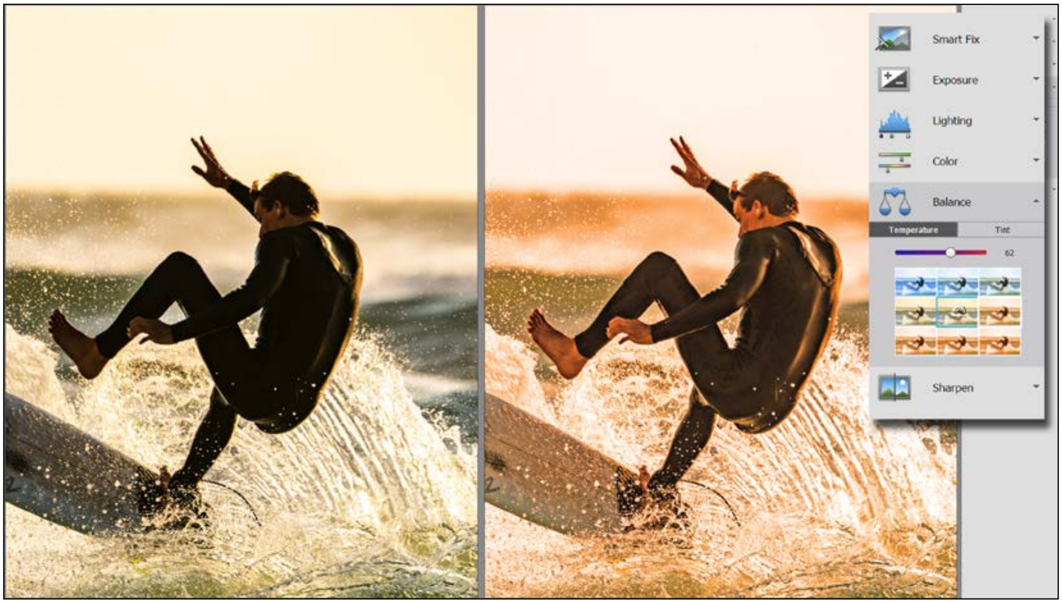
One of my all-time favourite formats. I create a lot of irregular-shaped files that need to blend into a different backgrounds, so the PNG's transparency-saving capability feature allows me to create irregular orientations (you can see an example of this in *Chapter 1*, in the *Plugins* section):

- **Compression**: PNG files are lossless; therefore, **None** is a fast way to save a file, but it is larger than a JPEG. You can add compression and you lose no quality, but it takes longer to create.
- **Interlaced**: Keep it set to **None**. Because the internet is so fast, **Interlaced**, just like **Progressive** for JPEGs, is redundant.

Using Auto Correction tools

If you don't like the Organizer's rather brief **Instant Fixes**, Elements has a stack of other automated editing tools located within the **Quick** and **Expert** modes. These effects are designed to make your picture editing go faster, and with less stress. Some, I think, are nothing short of beautiful, while others might not be so impressive.

There are hundreds of visual possibilities achievable with these features and if some don't work, there will be many others that do. Some of these auto features have several processes wrapped up into the one tool, so, although most work admirably, some might do little or nothing to your shot. If this happens, just undo the last action and try another auto tool.



Here's a screenshot of the tone correction tools in **Quick** edit mode, set to a **warmer** color temperature, on the right. Use the slider to fine-tune the effect, or just hit one of the nine tone thumbnails to select a different effect recipe.

Tip: The best file formats to save an edited RAW file are as follows:

JPEG: These are the most common. Used for emailing, use in digital photo books, and social media.

TIFF: A robust file format designed for more aggressive editing or high-end printing.

PSD: (Photoshop): An excellent format if you are creating masks, selections, multi-layered edits, adding text, and more.

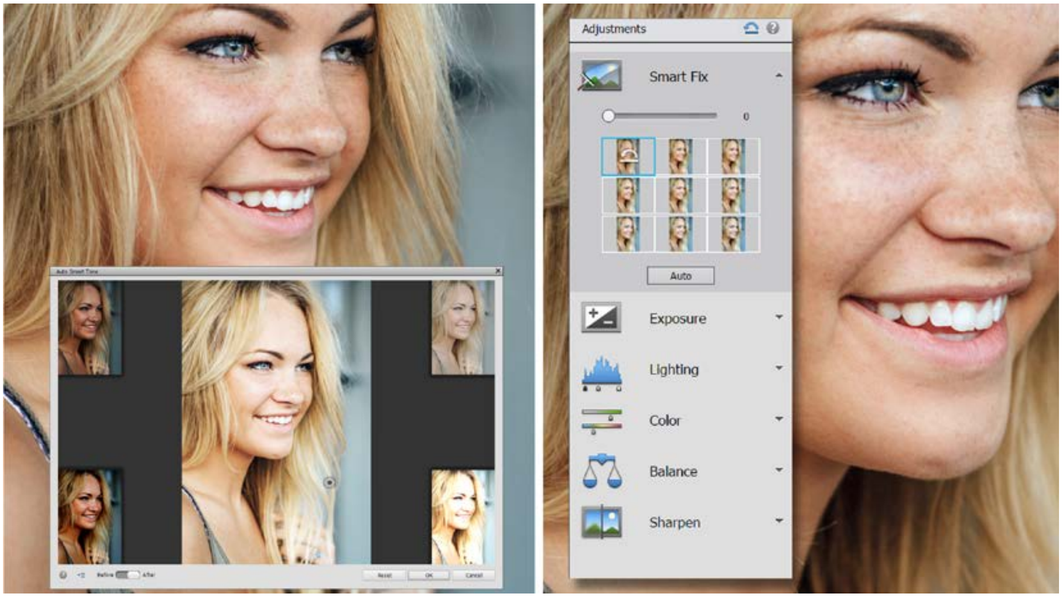
PNG: Produces larger files than a JPEG - perfect for any project where you need a transparent background. Also used online where the quality of the image is paramount.

Here's how to use the auto correction tools using the **Quick** edit mode:

Step one: From the **Organizer**, select an image and press *Ctrl/Cmd + I* to open that file in the **Editor** window. It opens in whatever edit space you were last using. If this is **Expert**, click **Quick** at the top of the window to switch it to the easier-to-use **Quick** edit space.

Step two: At the bottom right, you'll see the **Adjustment**, **Effects**, **Textures**, and **Frames** tabs. Click **Adjustments** to open that panel, and note the **Smart Fix**, **Exposure**, **Lighting**, **Color**, **Balance**, and **Sharpen** tools that slide out of the right-hand panel. To use these effectively, start at the top (**Smart Fix**) and click **Auto**. If this doesn't help, slide the cursor over the tiny thumbnails to select another strength of the **Smart Fix** effect.

Step three: Then, move on to the **Exposure** setting and repeat the same process, if needed, or jump ahead to try one of the other features on offer.



Auto correction in the **Expert** edit space (above left) is quite different to the Quick Edit version (above right). Some of the features offer no adjustment, while others, such as **Auto Smart Tone**, are not really *automatic* at all because they're fully adjustable. Even so, these features are effective to use.

Here's how to use the auto correction tools using the **Expert** edit mode:

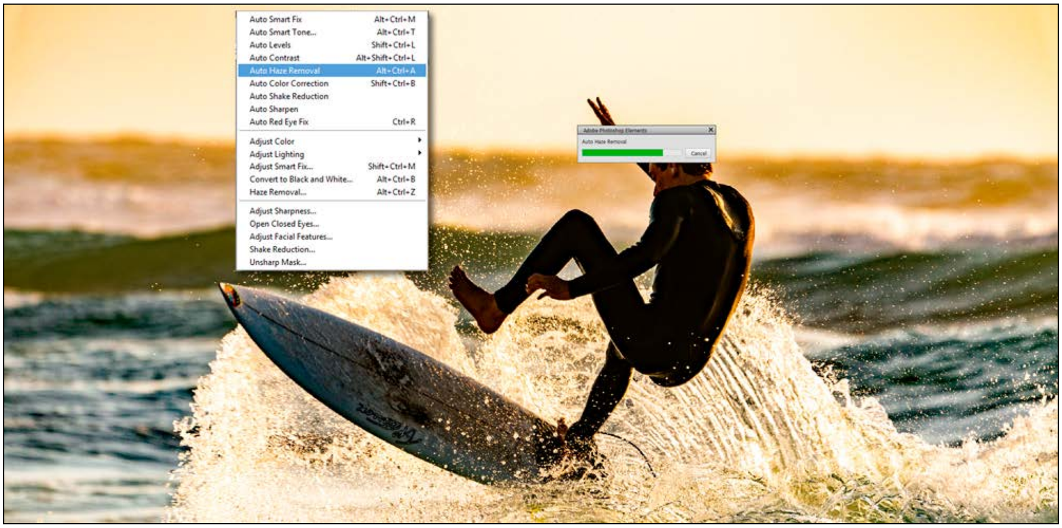
Step one: Open an image from **Organizer** in the **Expert** window.

Step two: Starting at the top, click the **Enhance** menu and try the **Auto Smart Fix** or **Auto Smart Tone** features. (Note that the **Auto Smart Fix** might not do much, but if its effect is too strong, use the **Adjust Smart Fix** feature, which, weirdly, is located 11 items further down the menu. In my mind, this should be part of the top-level **Smart Fix**.) **Smart Tone** has its own adjustment window.

Then continue to run through the rest of the auto tone-fixing features:

- **Auto Levels** will adjust both contrast and color.
- **Auto Contrast** will adjust only the black and white tones in the frame (not the color).
- **Auto Haze Removal**, as the name suggests, is ideal for hazy days, dust, fog, mist, and sea spray. It adds clarity while sometimes making the image darker with more contrast. Often, this action is too harsh – be careful not to overdo it!
- **Auto Shake Reduction** sounds too good to be true, but it can reduce the appearance of blurriness quite effectively. Note that the **Shake Reduction** feature, second from the bottom in this menu, gives you greater control over how this tool works and might prove to be the most effective way to go with not-very-sharp pictures.
- **Auto Sharpen**, amazingly often, hits the spot nicely, adding just a bit more *snappiness* to the edges of your subject and making it appear crisper than it was before. Like all the **Auto** tools, though, **Auto Sharpen** can often leave you wishing for a stronger version – which, of course, you will find with the **Adjust Sharpness** and **Unsharp Mask** tools seen further down the menu.

See how **Haze Removal, Shake Reduction**, and other sharpening tools work in greater detail in *Chapter 8*, *Exporting the Finished Work*.


Auto Smart Fix Alt+Ctrl+M
Auto Smart Tone... Alt+Ctrl+T
Auto Levels Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Contrast Alt+Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Haze Removal Alt+Ctrl+A
Auto Color Correction Shift+Ctrl+B
Auto Shake Reduction
Auto Sharpen
Auto Red Eye Fix Ctrl+R
Adjust Color
Adjust Lighting
Adjust Smart Fix... Shift+Ctrl+M
Convert to Black and White... Alt+Ctrl+B
Haze Removal... Alt+Ctrl+Z
Adjust Sharpness...
Open Closed Eyes...
Adjust Facial Features...
Shake Reduction...
Unsharp Mask...
Adobe Photoshop Elements
Auto Haze Removal
Cancel

This is the **auto correction** range of tools from the all-important **Enhance** drop-down menu in the **Expert** edit space - with **Auto Haze Removal** highlighted.

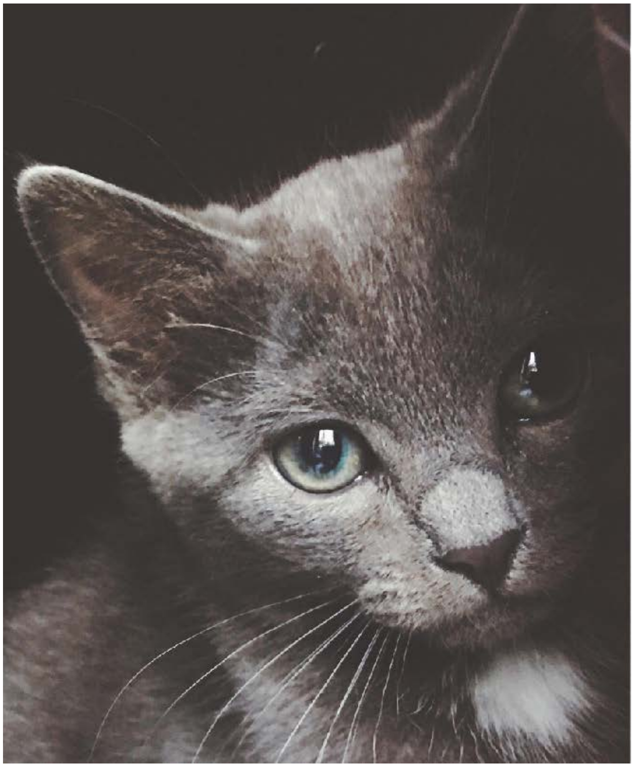
Mastering contrast with Levels

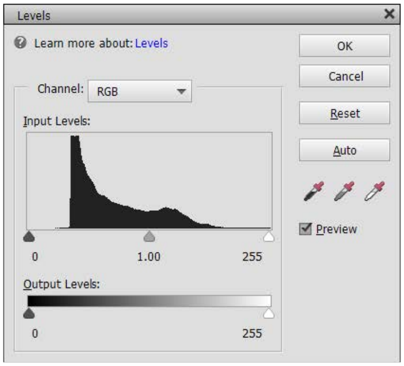
Contrast, or more specifically, a lack of contrast, is often the most noticeable fault in many pictures. This is partly because cameras are designed to capture images with a slightly lower contrast than was actually present in reality – and in doing so, they capture a slightly wider range of tones than if they were recording higher contrast from the get-go.

JPEGs are processed in-camera—which is why, when compared with a RAW file, they will always appear slightly more colorful—but you can always extract more tonal range from a RAW file. It just needs a little more work.

The best tool to begin editing any non-RAW image (such as a JPG, TIFF, PNG, or PSD file) is **Levels** (*Ctrl/Cmd + L* or **Enhance>Adjust Contrast>Levels**).

Levels is used to adjust the tonal distribution in any image. You'll recognize this when you see the **histogram** – this is the same display that you'd see on your camera's LCD screen when replaying a file (to make the histogram appear, press the **Display** or **Info** button on the back of the camera). Some cameras do not display the shooting information by default – it has to be turned on via the **Camera** menu.





Channel: RGB

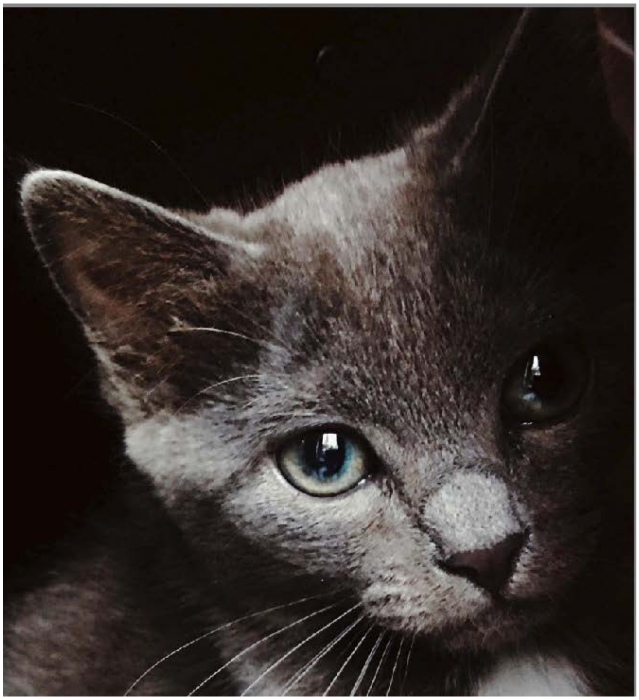
Input Levels:

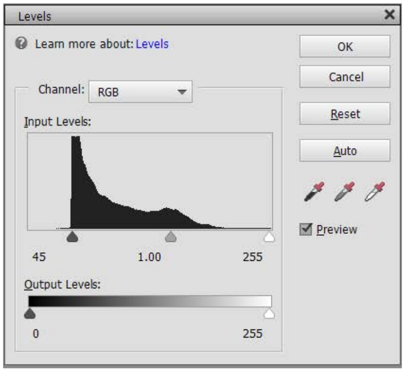
0 1.00 255

Output Levels:

0 255

Digital files typically display in low contrast (that is, the black tones usually look a bit washed out). Although this is a very cute-looking kitten, its tones are a little washed out or low contrast. In the **Input Levels** panel, if you see a flat area to the left or right of the tone *mountain* shape, it most likely needs *fixing*.




Levels
Learn more about: Levels
OK
Cancel
Reset
Auto
Preview

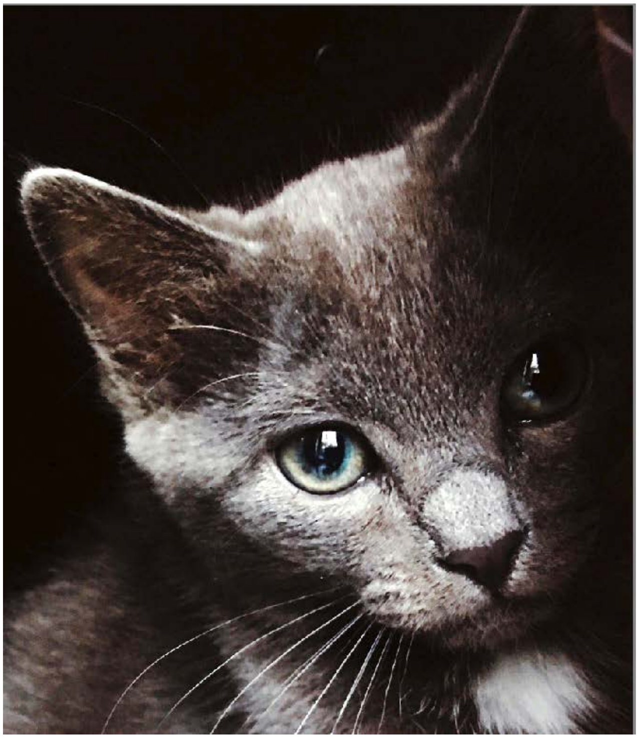
Channel: RGB

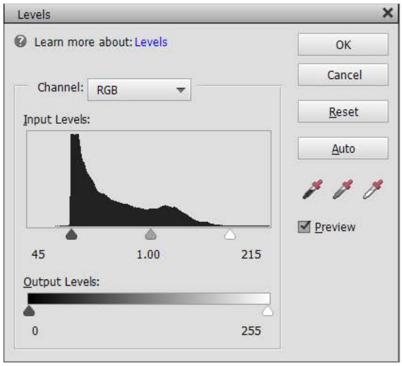
Input Levels: 45 1.00 255

Output Levels: 0 255

☑ Preview

As soon as the shadow slider is shifted to the right (in the **Input Levels** scale), the darker parts of the image go even darker and might lose detail, even though it actually appears clearer and sharper. To maintain all the tonal range in the file, restrict yourself to stopping at the edge of the tonal mountain, as is illustrated in this screenshot.




Levels
Learn more about: Levels
OK
Cancel
Reset
Auto
Preview

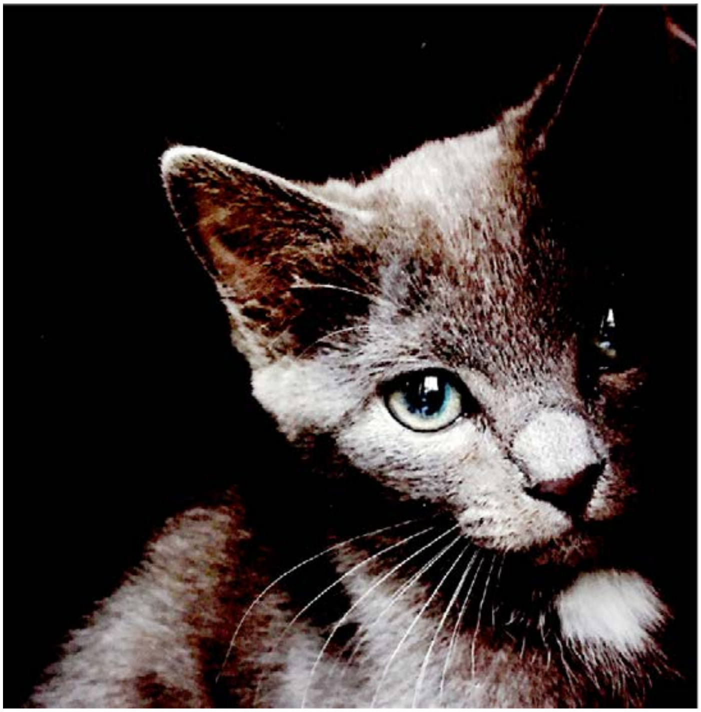
Channel: RGB

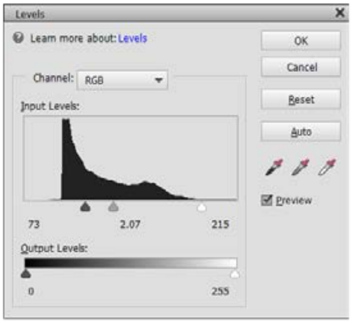
Input Levels: 45 1.00 215

Output Levels: 0 255

☑ Preview

I shifted the shadow and the highlight sliders to the right and left, respectively, stopping just at the edges of that central mountain shape. The shadows are darker and the highlights are brighter. In general, this is all the editing needed to make them pop with tonal interest. The shape of the tone mountain doesn't make any difference to the result.



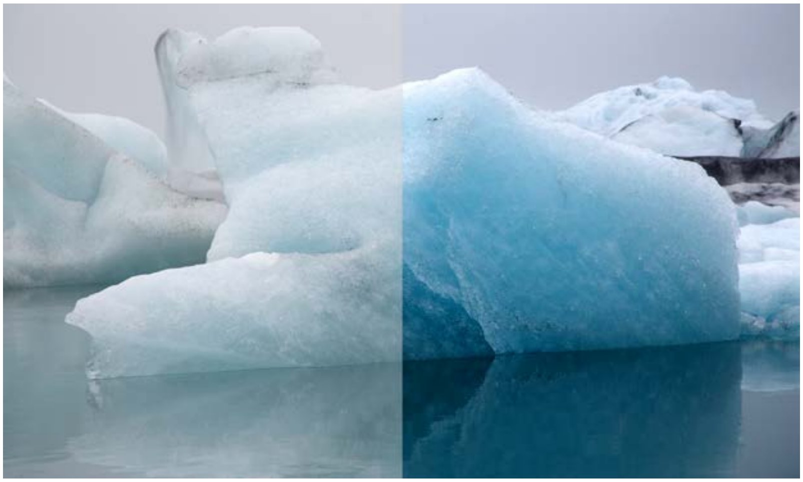


Channel: RGB

Input Levels: 73 2.07 215

Output Levels: 0 255

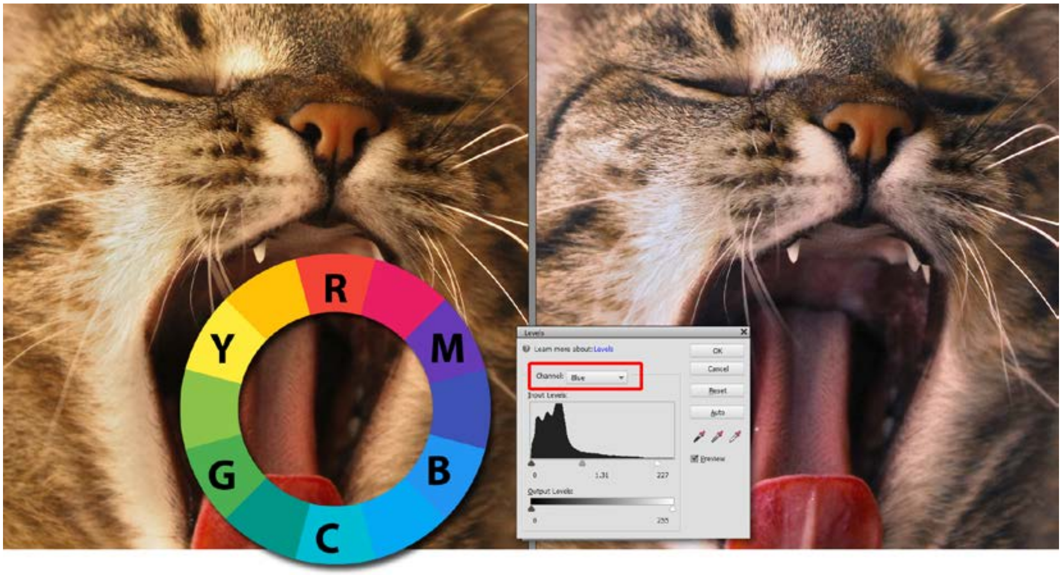
Here, I dragged those sliders too far toward the center of the **Input Levels** scale. This produces a contrast boost (which has also affected the color values). The black is not jet black and prevents you from seeing any detail; the whites are also a bit too bright. The **Output Levels** scale is used to lower the brightness of the shadows and highlights, which in turn drops the contrast.



A Contrast boost, as you can see here between an unprocessed file, on the left-hand side of this screenshot, and with the **Levels** adjustment added on the right-hand side, can make any image look 100% better.

Tip:

In general, an **Auto Levels** adjustment works quite well – but it adjusts both contrast and color in the one action, which might not be what you want. I advise against using **Auto Levels**, because what do you do when this doesn't work the way you want it to? You have to come up with a **Plan B** – and this requires more time and effort.

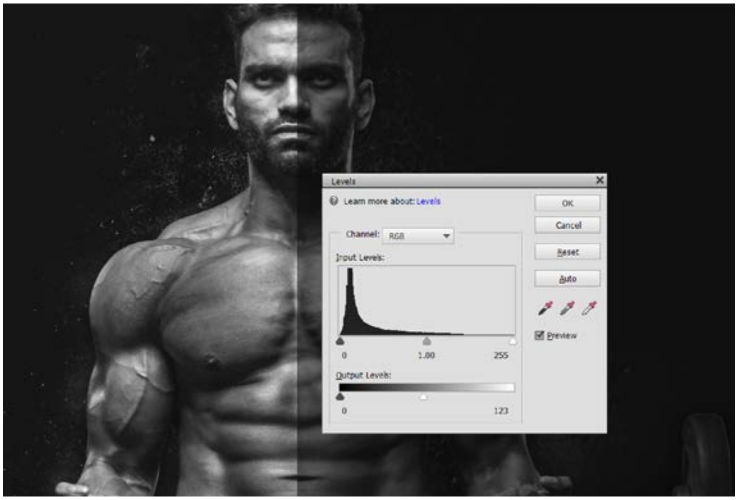


Channel: Blue

Input Levels: 0 1.31 227

Output Levels: 0 255

General adjustments using **Levels** are good for perfecting the contrast range in most files. These are **global adjustments** that are applied to all three channels (red, green, and blue) at the same time. If you make adjustments to just one color channel, you can shift the image color quite considerably. I'd use these color channels to add a warm tint to any shot, to correct a color cast (that is, from a white balance mistake), or just to add a color accent to the image. As you can see in this screenshot, the **Channel** drop-down menu now reads **Blue**. The blue histogram is a different shape to the three-color RGB histogram. Move the slider to the left to add blue and to the right to add the opposite color: yellow. The color wheel displays RGB and their opposite colors: cyan, magenta, and yellow.



Channel: RGB

Input Levels: 0 1.00 255

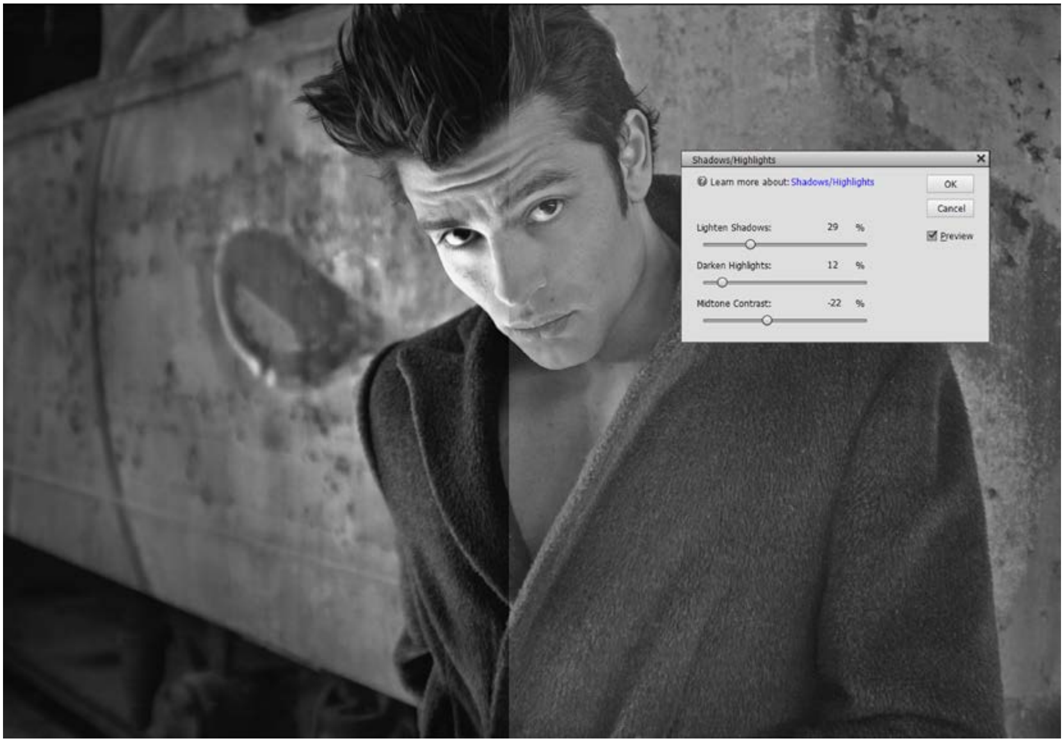
Output Levels: 0 123

Lowering contrast: Levels has a second scale, **Output Levels**, which is used for reducing the black density and the highlight brightness, as you can see with this dramatic black and white image. The original is on the left, while the right-hand version shows distinctly lowered brightness in the highlights, essentially dulling the image significantly.

Shadow/Highlights

You'll note that under the **Enhance>Adjust Lighting** menu, there are two other tools worth mentioning: **Brightness/Contrast** and **Shadows/Highlights**.

The former does exactly what **Levels** does, but without the benefit of being able to see that tone mountain, which for most photographers is enough encouragement not to use this feature. It's also regarded as being a destructive form of editing – too much use might damage the pixels irreparably, so I'd not recommend using it.



Lighten Shadows: 29 %

Darken Highlights: 12 %

Midtone Contrast: -22 %

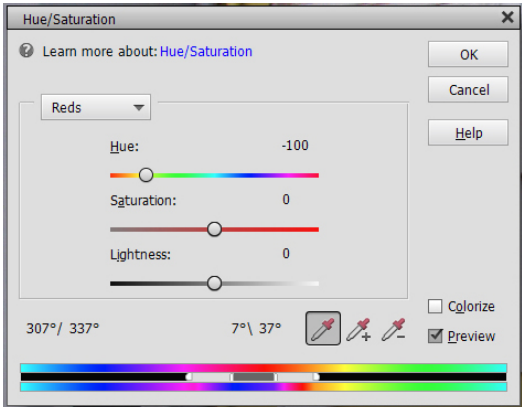
☑ Preview

The **Shadows/Highlights** tool can be very useful for rescuing tones that might appear lost in the highlights and the shadows areas, for boosting details in the darkest parts of the file. Some care must be taken with this feature because too much and it will make the result appear fake.

Remember that if you are doing this on a JPEG file, it has already been processed in-camera, so if there appears to be no tone in the lighter parts of an image, you might not be able to recover them at all, but it's certainly worth a try. You'll have more luck using the shadow-recovering part of this slider, revealing details that might be hidden in an over-darkened part of the file. Although the photographer deliberately hid some of the darker details in this striking portrait, it's interesting to see how the image can change radically just by lightening the shadows only (on the right-hand side).

Adjusting color using Hue/Saturation

Elements has several color adjusting tools—the most commonly used one perhaps being **Hue/Saturation** (*Ctrl/Cmd + U*).



Reds

Hue: -100

Saturation: 0

Lightness: 0

☐ Colorize

☑ Preview

307°/ 337°

7°\ 37°

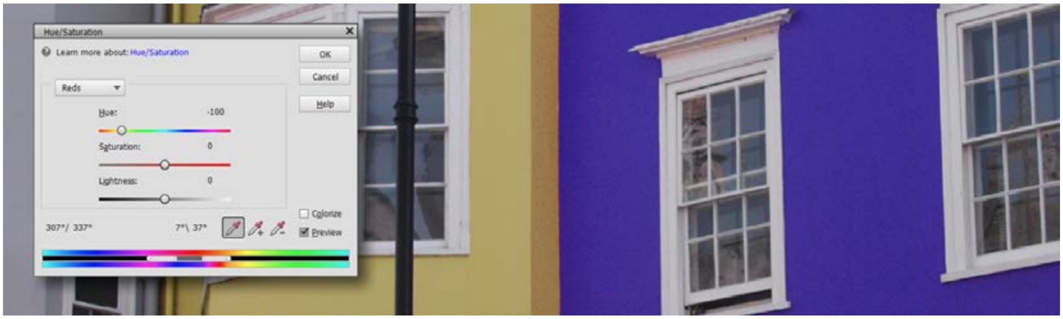
Hue describes the color values of the pixels – with this slider, you can reassign different color values to what's in the file, such as changing red to yellow. Used on its own, it operates **globally**, so not only do the red tones change to yellow, but all the other colors shift as well, often producing wildly surreal and not very useful color results.

The **Saturation** part of this feature controls the intensity of the color value in the pixels. So, if you set the slider to a minus amount, it begins to lose color, or *desaturate*, eventually turning black and white, while shifting it to the right increases the color values, making the image appear richer in color. This is a global change, so everything in the file gets more or less colorful.

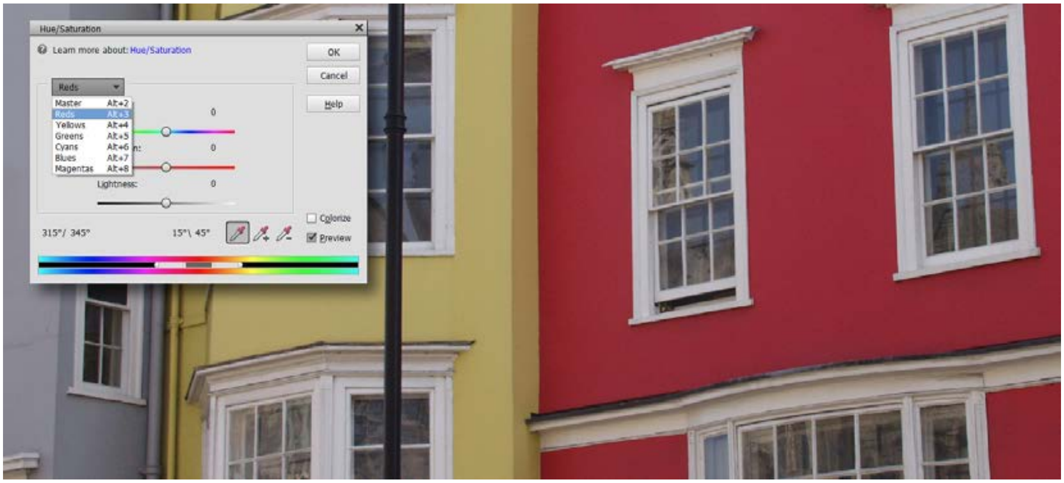
The third part of this tool, **Lightness**, isn't very useful. Moving this slider adjusts the maximum and minimum black levels in the file, essentially helping you fine-tune the global contrast in the file. It does the job, but I find using the **Output Levels** scale of **Levels** to be a more efficient tool to use if I need to lower the contrast. But you can decide for yourself.

All these effects are **global,** which, most of the time, is exactly not what we want to happen. For example, an image might just need the red tones to be brighter; nothing else. Elements has the answer:

- Choose the **Hue/Saturation** tool (**Enhance>Adjust Color>Hue/Saturation**).
- From the **Master** drop-down menu, choose the color that you'd like to adjust (that is, reds, yellows, greens, cyans, blues, or magentas). Note that these are Adobe colors – to make your color selection more accurate, move the cursor off the **Hue/Saturation** tool and over the picture, then click the exact color you want to change. You might see the color bars along the bottom of the panel shift as you sample the color in the photo, rather than picking the canned Adobe red.
- Moving the **Hue** slider now reassigns red to another color. (**Note**: you can also make use of the eye droppers at the bottom of the window to fine-tune a color selection. Use the left-hand dropper for a general color selection, then either the minus or plus droppers to add/subtract different tints from the initial selection.)
- Move the **Saturation** slider to minus 100 and anything red in the image will turn black and white; move it to a plus value and just red will increase in intensity.


Hue/Saturation
Learn more about: Hue/Saturation
OK
Cancel
Help
Colorize
Preview

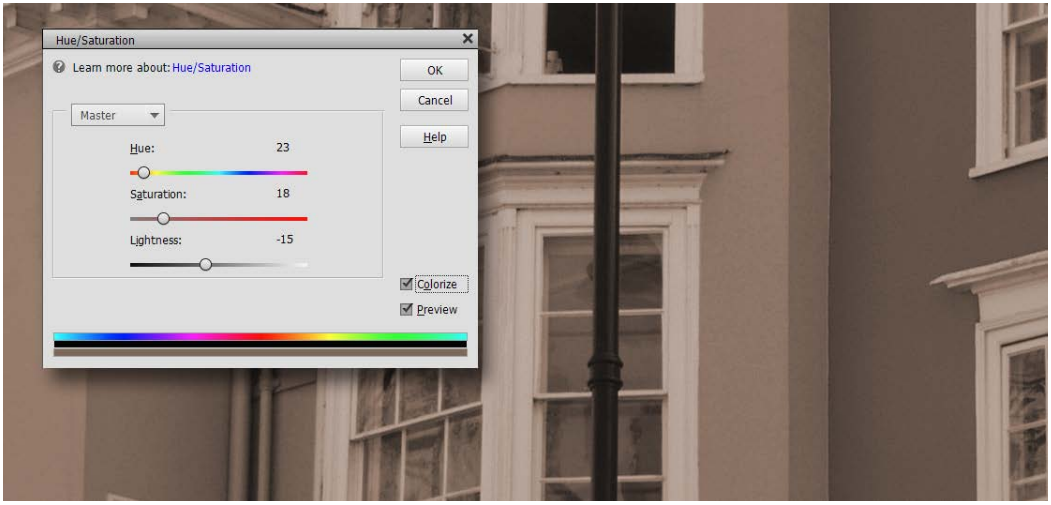
Reds
Hue: -100
Saturation: 0
Lightness: 0
307°/ 337°
7°\ 37°
☐ Colorize
☑ Preview


Hue/Saturation
Learn more about: Hue/Saturation
OK
Cancel
Help
Master Alt+2
Reds Alt+3
Yellows Alt+4
Greens Alt+5
Cyans Alt+6
Blues Alt+7
Magentas Alt+8
Colorize
Preview

Reds
0
0
Lightness: 0
315°/ 345°
15°\ 45°
☐ Colorize
☑ Preview

- If there are multiple red objects in the frame (and you only want to change one of them), you will have to make a **basic selection** using one of Elements' excellent selection tools to limit color changes to just that one object. Using this tool will also teach you a lot about the components of specific colors—how much the color yellow is a part of the color green, for example.
- To make your eyedropper color this selection even more specific, you can try shifting the tiny white pins along that rainbow-colored color picker located at the base of the HSL panel. The two inner pins limit how broad the color selection is – the narrower these are, the more specific the color choice. The gap between the inner and outer markers fades the initial color selection from that specific color with the new color, blue. The further apart these pins are from each other, the softer the gradation from the chosen color to the color that's next to it. This sounds more complex than it really is. Move the pins to see how they affect fading from one color change into another.

Warning: Although adjustments to the saturation values can make your image look amazing, very few home inkjet printers can reproduce the intensity of the color created. They will look OK once uploaded to social media but if levels are higher than about +25 `saturation`, the color is not reproduceable in print.


Hue/Saturation
Learn more about: Hue/Saturation
OK
Cancel
Help

Master

Hue: 23

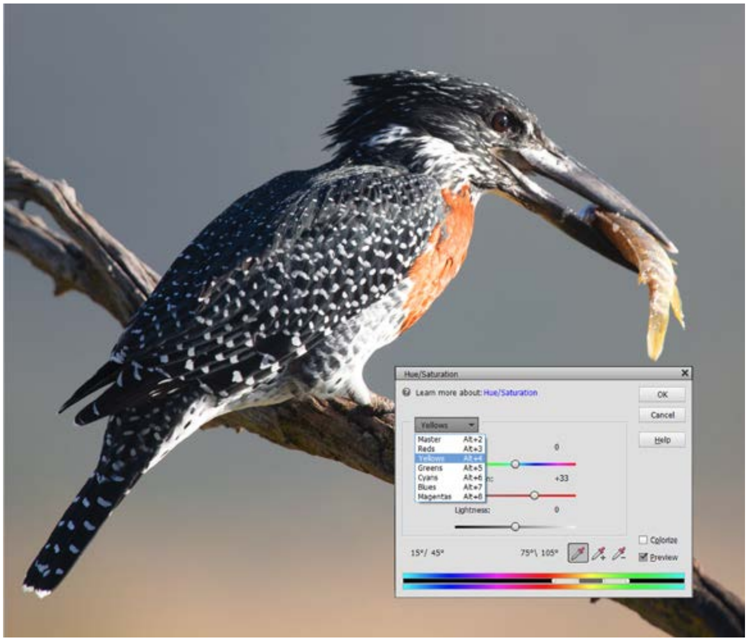
Saturation: 18

Lightness: -15

☑ Colorize

☑ Preview

Olde worlde effect: A final tip is to use the **Colorize** feature (check this at the bottom right-hand side of the tool). This instantly renders any color image as a monochrome file with a colored tint – the color (hue) is controlled using the **Hue** slider (naturally). Its intensity can be adjusted with the **Saturation** slider. You can also achieve this look using **Guided** Edit's old fashioned photo preset or the new **Duotone Effect**, also in **Guided** Edits.


Hue/Saturation
Learn more about: Hue/Saturation
OK
Cancel
Help
Master Alt+2
Reds Alt+3
Yellows Alt+4
Greens Alt+5
Cyans Alt+6
Blues Alt+7
Magentas Alt+8

Yellows

0

+33

Lightness: 0

15°/ 45°

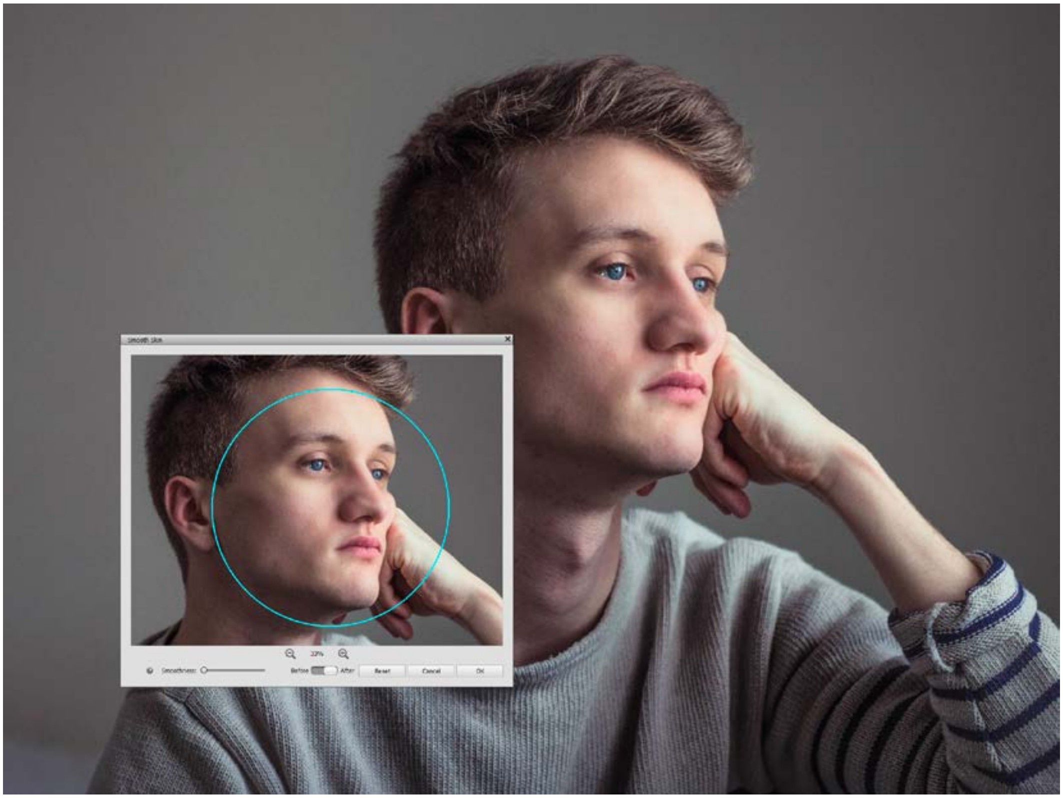
75°\ 105°

☐ Colorize

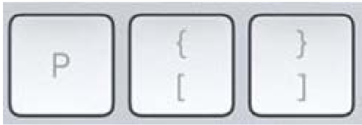
☑ Preview

Left: Another good example of where the color selection process, via **Hue/Saturation**'s **Master** drop-down menu, can radically improve just about any image. I was happy with this shot but felt the red breast in this bird needed a bit of a boost. By selecting **Red** from the menu, then clicking actually on the red in the image with the dropper, I could increase the strength of the red without affecting much else in the frame. I also did this using the **Yellow** drop-down option, thus making the fish appear a little more appetising (to the bird).

Smooth Skin



One highly effective feature in Elements is this: **Smooth Skin—**no guesses for what this does. Open an image, apply the feature (**Enhance>Smooth Skin**), and make a quick adjustment in the (smallish) window that appears onscreen (see above). This features works very well, provided that the artificial intelligence driving this feature can identify a face in the picture. It does not work so well for profiles, or shots where the subject is not looking more or less at the camera. It does work, however, with pictures that feature multiple faces. The blue circle is the "active" face—with multiples, click a face to make it active.

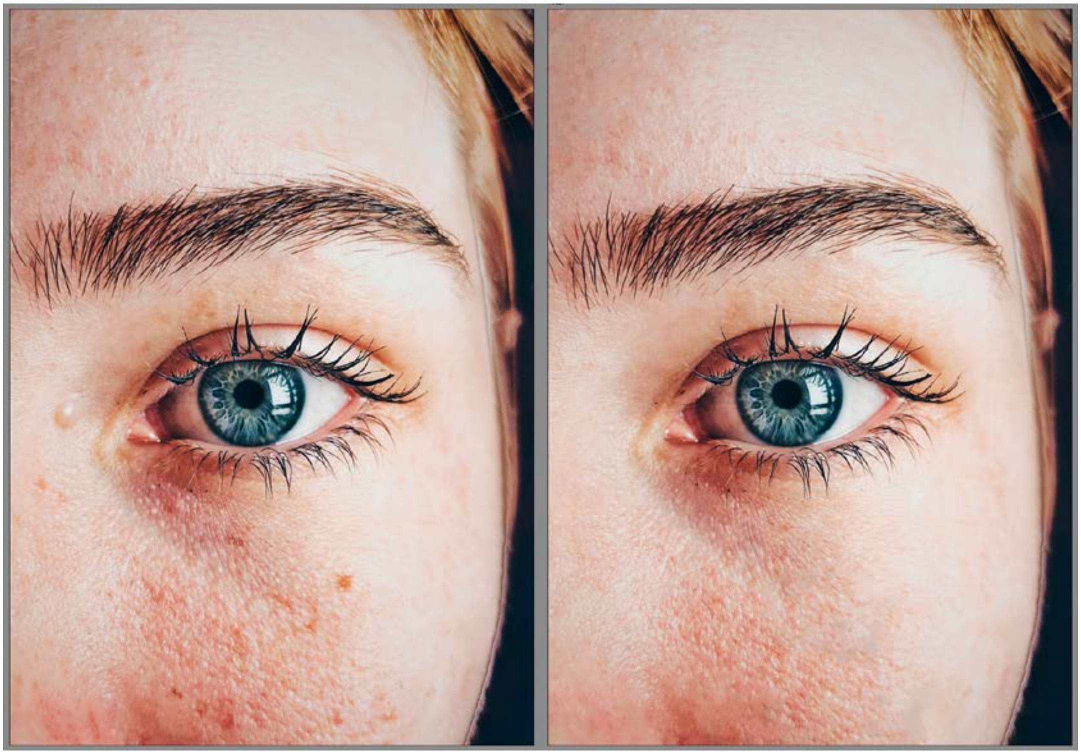


Tip:

Use the square brackets to enlarge/reduce the size of the brush. Use the *Ctrl/Cmd* + + and—to increase/decrease the image size to get right into the areas that need attention. *Ctrl/Cmd* + *0* (zero) returns an enlarged/reduced image to fit the entire screen.

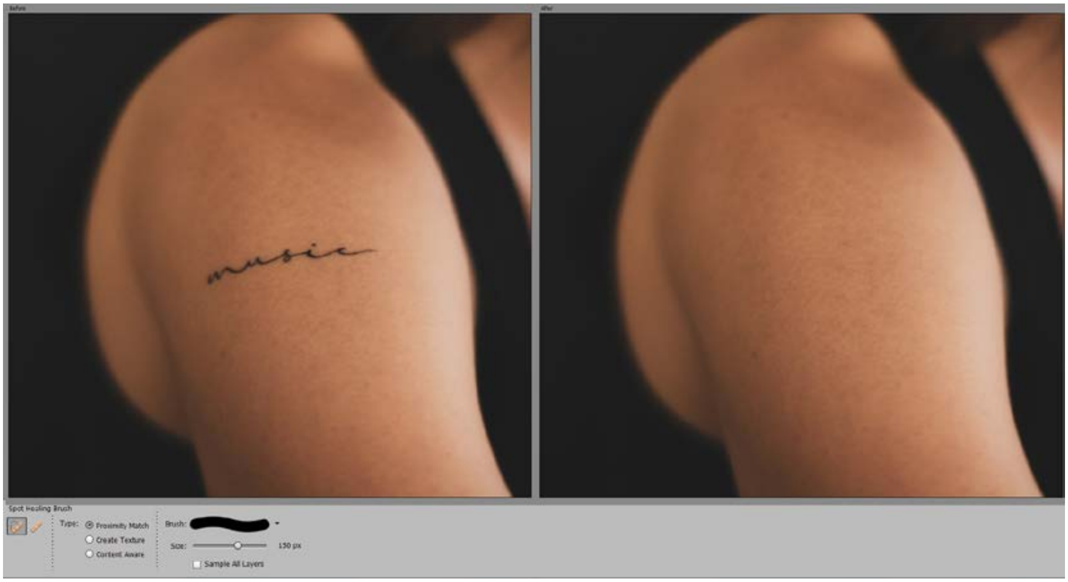
Simple retouching – spot removal

I clearly remember when the **Spot Healing Brush** was first announced by Adobe. It was at the launch of Adobe Photoshop 7.0 in 2002, and once the presentation was over, there was a stampede to the back of the auditorium to buy the product (which was the *thing* to do in those days), such was the impact it had on all those portraitists, wedding shooters, and retouching gurus. Overnight, their lives had changed, because no longer did they have to make careful selections, feather that selection, then copy and paste the selected area from one part of the shot to another, then line it up directly over the skin blemish, before blending the copied pixels into the background using **Layer Opacity** settings.



This before and after example took about three minutes to complete—that's how easy the **Spot Healing Brush** tool is to use. Set the brush diameter a little larger than the blemish area. Click it once, and the blemish disappears.

It seemed like magic at the time it was launched, but now this tool is totally synonymous with retouching, and can be found in a huge range of photo editors, including Elements. This tool is exceptionally good for cleaning up the smaller blemishes in our lives. If there's a large object that needs removing—or if the blemish is among other textures that you need to keep—then the **Healing Brush** or **Clone Stamp** tools would be more appropriate because they can be set to copy from a custom source area.



Spot Healing Brush

Type: ● Proximity Match ○ Create Texture ○ Content Aware

Brush:

Size: 150 px

☐ Sample All Layers

This screenshot of the tattooed man is a perfect example of the type of job **Spot Healing Brush** is good for. The blemish is relatively small, and the source, the area used to sample good pixels from, is large, limiting the possibility of retouching mistakes happening.

Retouching Troubleshooting Tips:

Despite being a superb tool, the retouching process doesn't always go to plan. It can smudge the image, blur details when it's not supposed to, and even copy and paste inappropriate bits of the image back into the frame rather than out of it! Here are some troubleshooting suggestions:

Instead of the **Spot Healing Brush** tool, try the regular **Healing Brush** tool—the main difference between the two is that while the former is principally a click-and-forget action, the latter offers better control over where the source information is coming from, which is especially useful if you are retouching small, confined areas.

Position the cursor over the area you want to sample (the **source**), hold down the *Alt/Opt* key, and click once. Release the *Alt/Opt* key.

Reposition the cursor over the area to be fixed (the **target**) and click once, or click, hold, and drag to copy continuously from source to target.

How much is transferred is controlled by the brush **Opacity** setting (so, if set to 50%, you'll have to click twice on the target area to transfer all the pixels from the source area to cover the damage entirely).

Lowering the brush opacity is helpful because clicking multiple times can assist in blending mismatched tones together more convincingly.

Reselecting the source area again and again from different parts of the image is one way to work with a limited source area. Another way to do it is to check the **Aligned** check box in the tool **Options** panel. This leaves the target exactly where it was first clicked. Clicking and dragging makes the source move with the target, but just clicking repeatedly does not.

Additional resources

Using keyboard shortcuts has several significant benefits for photographic editors, regardless of their skill level. Firstly, they take the pressure off your mouse hand. If every function is performed using only the mouse, you will tire more easily. It can also lead to greater physical strain, which in turn could lead to all sorts of medical issues (such as stiffness, arthritis, and even carpal tunnel problems).

Therefore, using a few keyboard shortcuts will not only help to alleviate the physical stresses of just using one hand to edit images, but they'll also significantly speed up the editing process and make your actions more efficient. Elements has a huge range of possible keyboard shortcuts – far too many for most of us to remember, let alone to use effectively, so to keep things as simple and as practical as possible, here are a few of the most **relevant shortcuts** for this chapter.

The descriptions and their shortcuts are as follows:

- Create a new, blank file: *Ctrl/Cmd + N*
- Auto Smart Fix: *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + M*
- Adjust Smart Fix: *Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + M*
- Auto Smart Tone: *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + T*
- Auto Levels: *Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + L*
- Auto Contrast: *Alt/Opt + Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + L*
- Auto Haze Removal: *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + A*
- Auto Color Correction: *Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + B*
- Auto Redeye (removal): *Ctrl/Cmd + R*
- Convert to black and white: *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + B*
- Haze Removal: *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + Z*
- Levels: *Ctrl/Cmd + L*
- Hue/Saturation: *Ctrl/Cmd + U*
- Open a file: *Ctrl/Cmd + O*
- Close a file: *Ctrl/Cmd + W*
- Close all open files: *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + W*
- Save As (that is, to give your edited file a proper name): *Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + S*
- Open in Camera RAW (used specifically if you want to open a non-RAW file in this editing window): *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + O*

Summary

In this chapter, we have looked at introducing you to the **best editing practices** in Elements so as to streamline your creative photographic workflow, which in turn will make your output more efficient, giving you more time to shoot pictures. It's also been a comprehensive introduction to the use of **RAW files**, and most importantly, how to edit them using Elements' **Camera RAW** utility – an important step if you are to develop and maintain a high level of professionalism in your creative careers. We should also now have a good understanding of **image resolution** and file **resampling** when it comes to reducing or enlarging image files.

We have also seen how easy it is to come up with a stunning look for your images by editing them using one of Elements' many instant-preset **special effects** and **image fixes**, just as you might when applying an Instagram filter online. It's important for beginners to see how easy it is to produce beautiful effects with no previous experience. These effects not only work with very high-resolution images, but also provide a far greater depth of choice. We have also made ourselves familiar with the all- tasks of controlling **brightness**, **contrast**, and **color** using two of Elements' most important non-RAW editing tools for **Levels** and **Hue/Saturation**, plus some of its more esoteric, but nevertheless useful and fun features, including changing facial expressions and opening closed eyes. They might sound gimmicky, but they actually do the job surprisingly well.

Chapter 4, *Easy Creative Projects* highlights a number of what I call "Easy Creative Projects." Editorially, this sounds really impressive, and when you discover just how powerful these features are, it should certainly impress. We look at using filters, auto AI-driven photo colorizing, panorama stitching, how to remove clutter from your images, and making slideshows—just to name a few of the upcoming features. These are not only fun to play with—you'll discover how easy it is to attain great results.

4

Easy Creative Projects

In this chapter, you'll find a wide range of interesting special effects, most of which can be applied to your images with speed and ease.

I have always liked Elements' slightly alternative approach to image editing because it includes a lot of project-based editing skills rather than concentrating just on the skills of image editing. However, over the years, this has changed—Elements now boasts some of the most sophisticated editing features that you'd normally expect from the top end of town, while still retaining awesome features, such as panorama stitching, calendar making, and automated photo slideshows.

This chapter highlights a number of semi-automatic features that anyone can use to produce truly great results—without having to climb that steep learning curve (the steep learning curve starts at *Chapter 6*, *Advanced Editing Techniques*!).

What you will learn in this chapter:

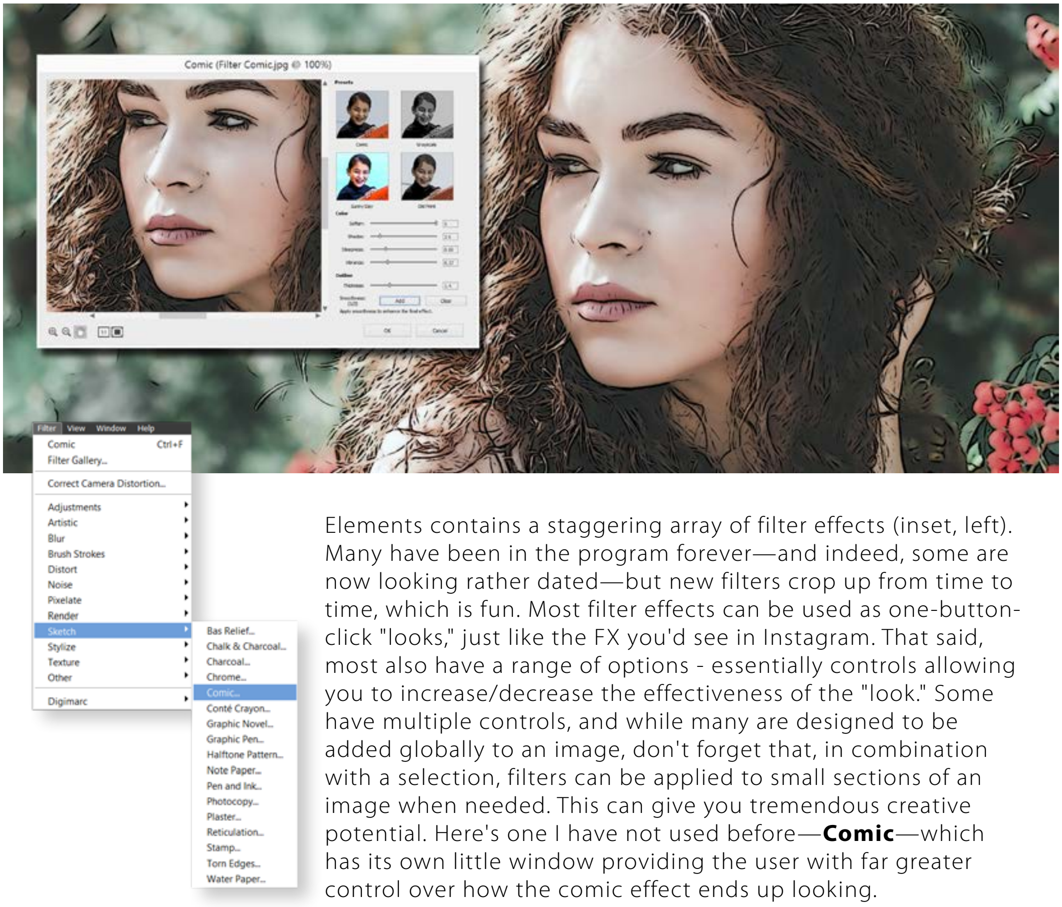
- Using filters
- Colorizing images
- Photomerge Panorama
- Making a multi-deck panorama
- Photomerge Scene Cleaner
- Photomerge Faces
- Making a slideshow
- Creating calendars
- Creating greeting cards
- Keyboard shortcuts

Bring life back to those old photos - try out Elements' impressive **auto colorize** feature.

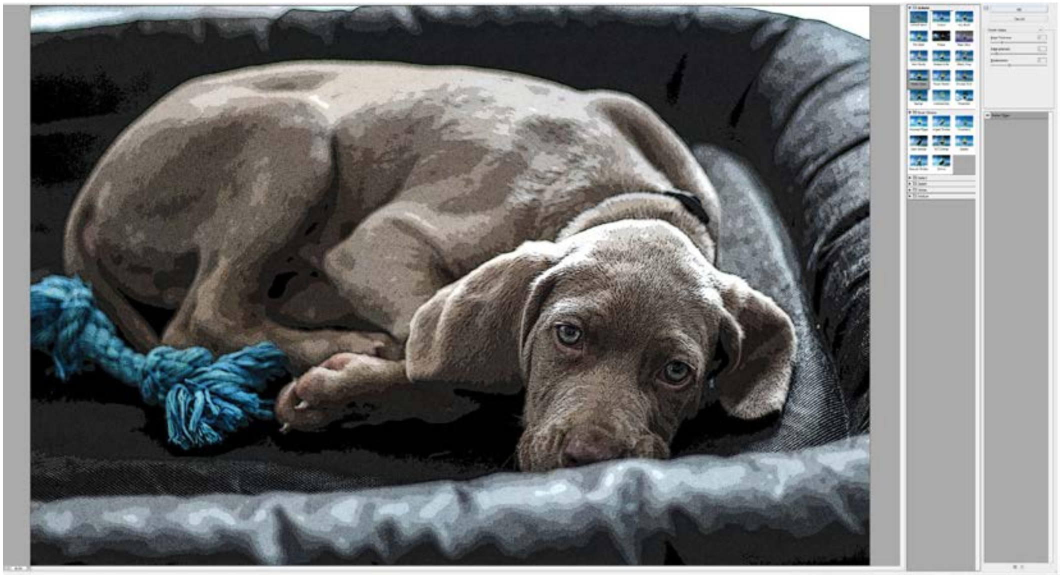
Simple visual effects: using Filters

Elements is heading in the direction of the smartphone. By this I mean that the visual effects achievable are increasingly thumbnail-driven. Open a file, check out a range of special effects, and apply one to your snap by clicking the thumbnail image. Nothing could be easier, and while doing this doesn't teach you how the effect is really achieved, it makes enhancing your work simple, fast, and approachable for the majority of camera users not wanting to spend hours in front of a screen.

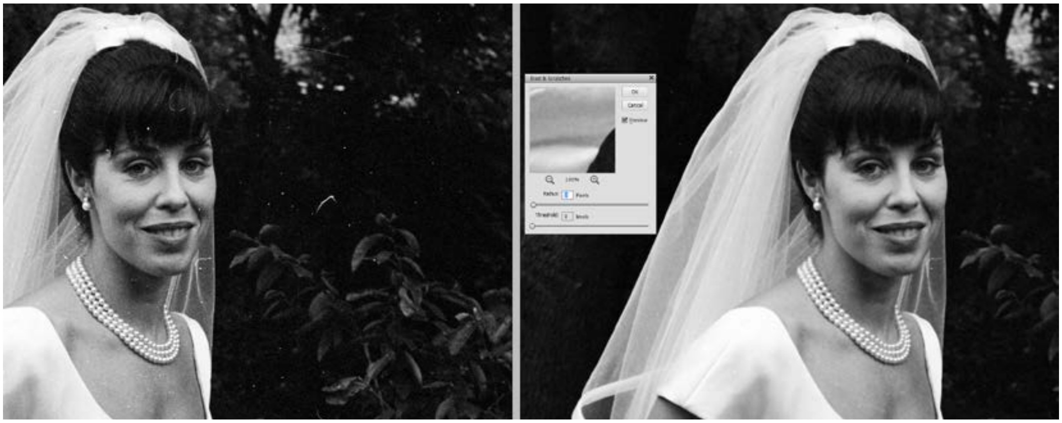
As there are over 100 filters in Elements, they are carefully sub-divided into collections: Adjustments, Artistic, Blur, Brush Strokes, Distort, Noise, Pixelate, Render, Sketch, Stylize, Texture, and Other. To make it easier to use the filters, Adobe supplies a mini-program called the **Filter Gallery**, which displays the filter effects in a large window alongside the various sliders that can make it really look good, or not. You might not like all of the filter "looks" on offer but don't forget, if it appeals to you, you can then edit it further to modify what the automated process throws at you so that it's more to your taste.


Comic (Filter Comic.jpg @ 100%)
Presets
Comic
Grayscale
Color
Outline
OK
Cancel
Filter
View
Window
Help
Comic Ctrl+F
Filter Gallery...
Correct Camera Distortion...
Adjustments
Artistic
Blur
Brush Strokes
Distort
Noise
Pixelate
Render
Sketch
Stylize
Texture
Other
Digimarc
Bas Relief...
Chalk & Charcoal...
Charcoal...
Chrome...
Comic...
Conté Crayon...
Graphic Novel...
Graphic Pen...
Halftone Pattern...
Note Paper...
Pen and Ink...
Photocopy...
Plaster...
Reticulation...
Stamp...
Torn Edges...
Water Paper...

Elements contains a staggering array of filter effects (inset, left). Many have been in the program forever—and indeed, some are now looking rather dated—but new filters crop up from time to time, which is fun. Most filter effects can be used as one-button-click "looks," just like the FX you'd see in Instagram. That said, most also have a range of options - essentially controls allowing you to increase/decrease the effectiveness of the "look." Some have multiple controls, and while many are designed to be added globally to an image, don't forget that, in combination with a selection, filters can be applied to small sections of an image when needed. This can give you tremendous creative potential. Here's one I have not used before—**Comic**—which has its own little window providing the user with far greater control over how the comic effect ends up looking.



The Filter Gallery: This screenshot shows the **Filter Gallery** with the effects filters represented in thumbnails on the right and their individual options in the column on the far right. (The puppy has had the **Poster Edges** filter added.) Sometimes the effect is a bit ho-hum. I find that if you cancel the filter, then brighten the file using **Levels**, and maybe increase the color saturation using **Hue/Saturation**, when you add the same filter, it gives a far better result.

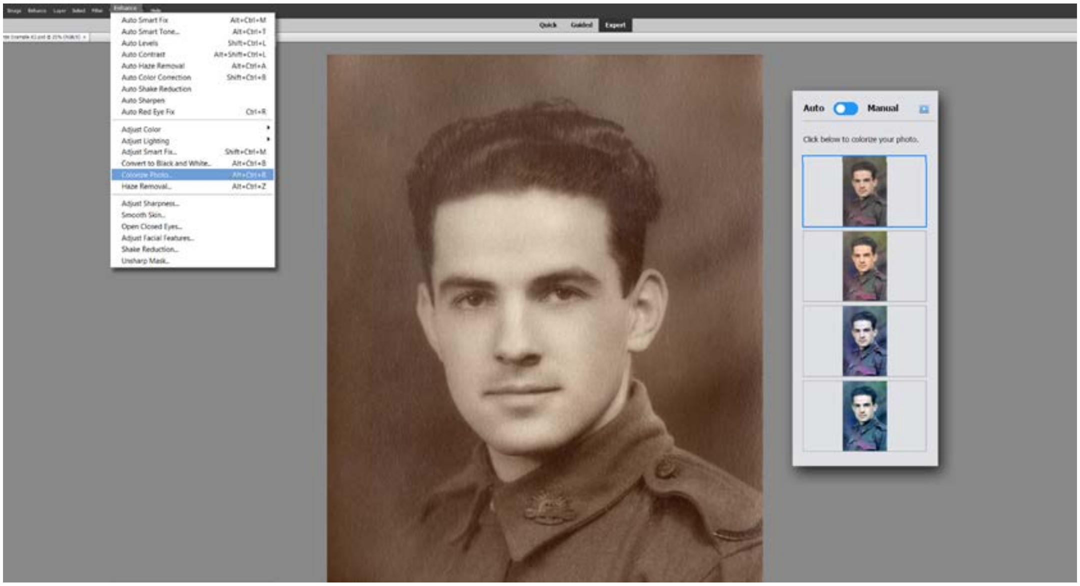


Cleaning up a scratched print scan: One of my favorites is the **Dust and Scratches** filter. It's not an effects filter but, as you can see in this screenshot, if you have a damaged, dusty, or scratched (scanned) print, the filter can remove nearly all of the visible dust marks. I had the filter set to 3 **pixels** and the result was impressive. If I'd set it to 5 or 6, the softening effect would have totally blurred the bride - so it has to be used with care so you don't lose detail. The large scratches and dust specks can easily be removed using the **Spot Healing Brush** tool.

Colorize: AI-driven creativity

One feature that Adobe has been developing is its use of **artificial intelligence** (**AI**), something that is perfectly demonstrated in this cool feature: **Colorize Photo**. You'll find it under the **Enhance** menu in the **Expert** window.

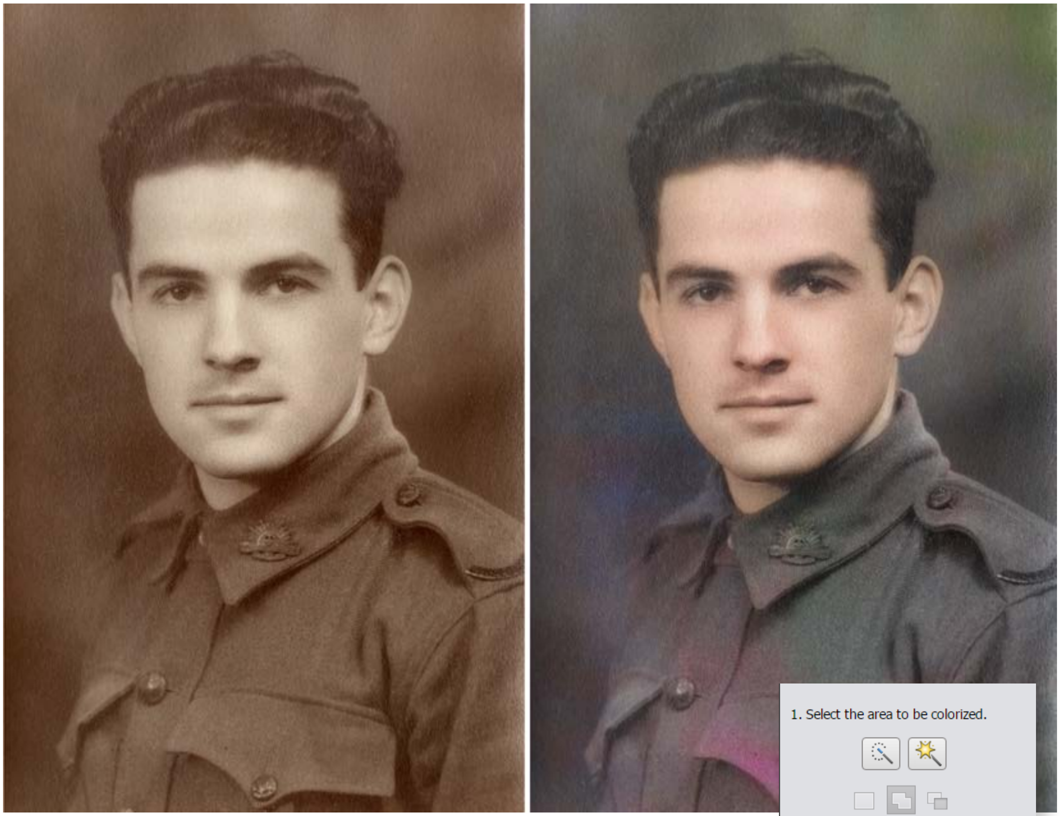
Initially, I was drawn to this effect because I have actually spent many years hand-coloring black-and-white images for sale around the city I live in. It's great fun but involves a lot of printing, coloring in, erasing, ripping up prints, and starting again. The oils used added a permanence to the print, so they naturally lasted a long time - I'm sure you'll find a few hand-colored photos among your family albums. Before colour photography was an affordable thing, this was the only way to get a color print!


Enhance
Auto Smart Fix Alt+Ctrl+M
Auto Smart Tone... Alt+Ctrl+T
Auto Levels Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Contrast Alt+Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Haze Removal Alt+Ctrl+A
Auto Color Correction Shift+Ctrl+B
Auto Shake Reduction
Auto Sharpen
Auto Red Eye Fix Ctrl+R
Adjust Color
Adjust Lighting
Adjust Smart Fix... Shift+Ctrl+M
Convert to Black and White... Alt+Ctrl+B
Colorize Photo... Alt+Ctrl+R
Haze Removal... Alt+Ctrl+Z
Adjust Sharpness...
Smooth Skin...
Open Closed Eyes...
Adjust Facial Features...
Shake Reduction...
Unsharp Mask...
Quick
Guided
Expert
Auto
Manual

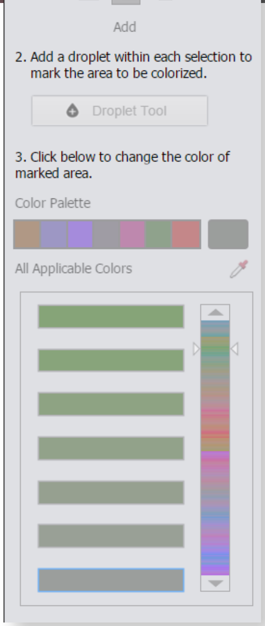
Click below to colorize your photo.

To use this feature, all that's needed is a black and white image (in this example, I started with a sepia picture) and choose one of the colorized "looks" from the panel on the right-hand side of the window.

Then, I noticed that Adobe has included a manual override mode in this new AI-driven feature. Brilliant, because this was not looking good. Manual mode allows you to elect different bits of the image for a color change - one at a time. Do this using one of the two selection tools offered: **Selection Brush** or **Magic Wand**. The problem with this image is that there's no distinct separation between the soldier's uniform and the background, thus making a clean selection nearly impossible. As you select one object in the photo, add a **droplet** - this means that any tint chosen floods the selected area with colour. You choose the tint and the depth of color from the drop-down color checker and it adds automatically. If it is too light or dark, just choose another color, then move on to select another part of the image, add a droplet, and then add another color.



In manual mode, the **Selection Brush** tool proved most effective for this picture - especially for the skin tones as they were so bright. But the uniform color bleeds into the background a bit. It's not really an accurate result, but it definitely looks like a genuine, hand-colored vintage photo.

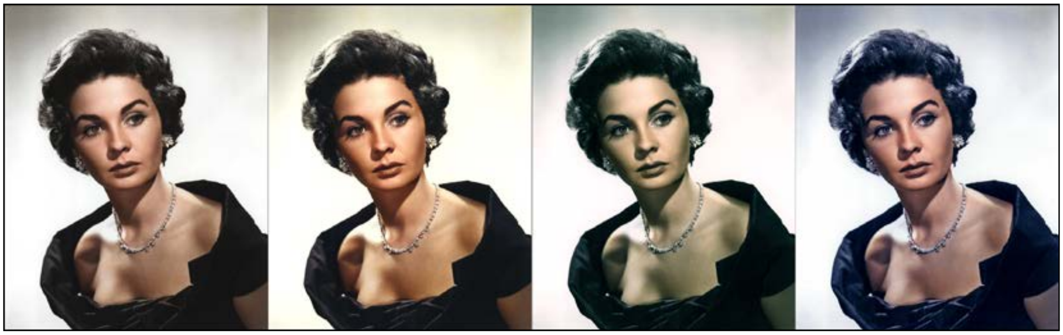


1. Select the area to be colorized.

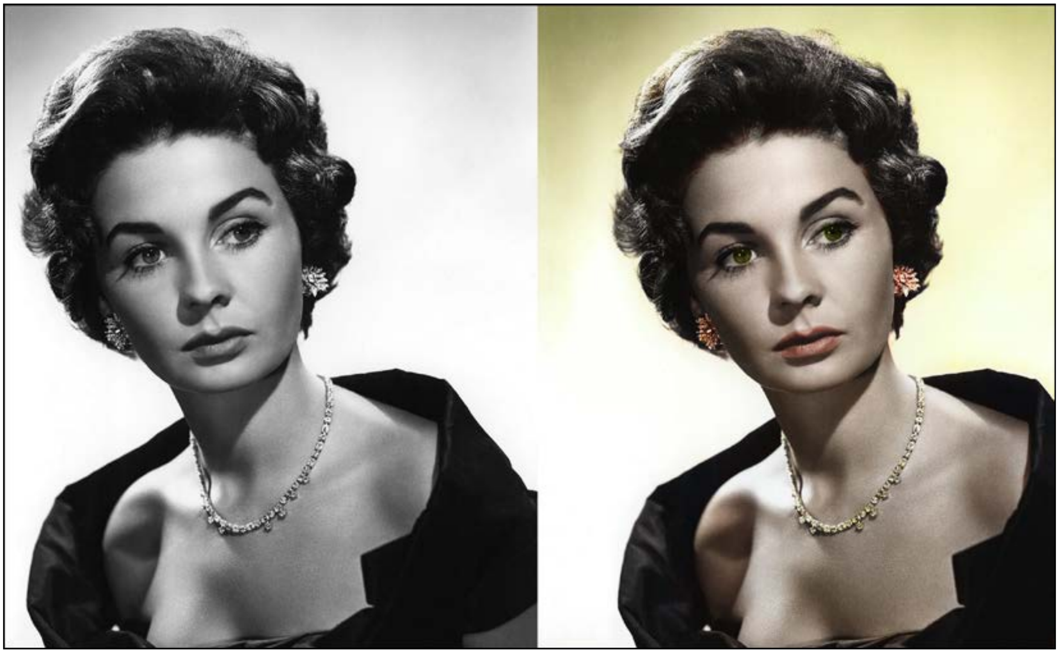
2. Add a droplet within each selection to mark the area to be colorized.

3. Click below to change the color of marked area.

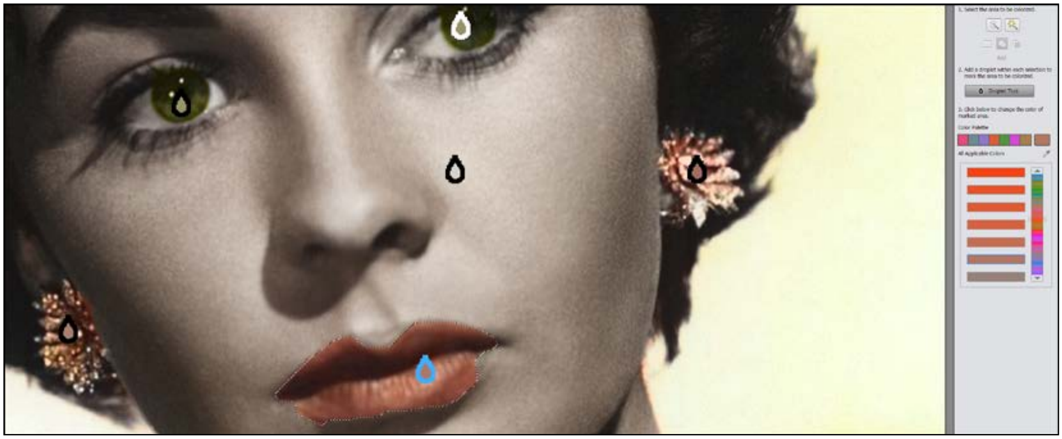
This is a brilliant tool because, as with most of the other examples you see here, the automatic, AI-generated, select-and-color process actually works beautifully. I found that the result from the sepia print of the soldier, although appearing different to how I'd imagined it would be, looked great - and that's the cool thing about many of these AI effects: they might not be 100% accurate but they do provide a raft of interesting creative options, many of which you might never have thought of.



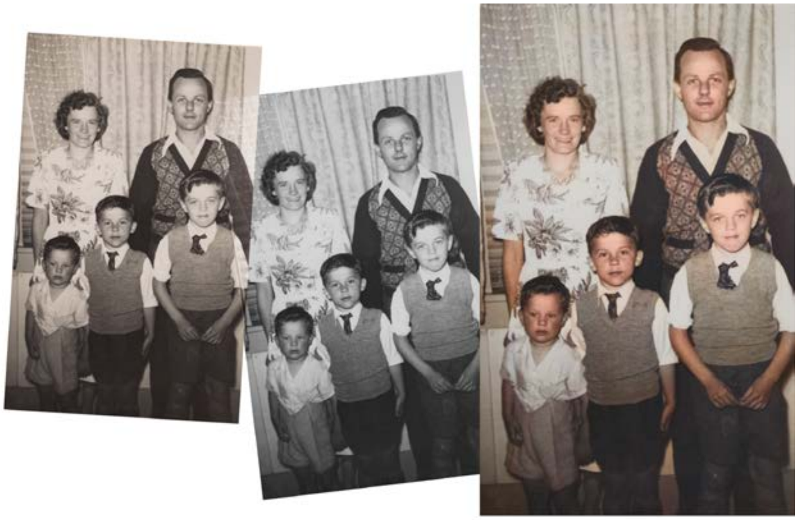
Try all the versions on offer: Next, I tried using this tool on this beautiful Hollywood promo shot of a Hepburn-esque model and, not surprisingly, all four AI-driven examples produced very acceptable results. The thumbnail strip shows a realistic colorization, then a warmer, then a greener, and finally, a cooler version. The second might be a bit over-tanned but mostly they are quite acceptable.



I then tried to improve what Adobe Sensei had produced in its auto mode with my own manually painted version. It took around 20 minutes and, although it's certainly a lot "cleaner" in terms of painting accuracy, unless you blow it up to 400%, you'll probably not appreciate the added work. As a tip, don't always accept what the program produces. If one result looks "sort of" OK, but it's not light or contrasty enough, boost the brightness/ contrast using **Levels**. Same with color - the over-tanned version at the top of the page is too much, but with **Hue/Saturation**, you can reduce the saturation so it becomes more acceptable. There's no right or wrong way to use these tools, just the way that works best for you.



In this close-up screen grab you can clearly see the different droplets on the model's face. Each one denotes a differently selected part of the image. The "active" droplet, the one currently being colored in, is highlighted in blue. In the final version I was able to add small areas of color to her lipstick, earrings, and the necklace. The combination of using a quality picture and the colors selected produced a result that looked as though it really was a professionally made hand-colored promo print from the '30s. I included the original black-and-white version as a comparison.



This image shows how well this auto coloring-in process works with no user intervention. It worked fine on these old family snaps (scanned files). To get the most out of this effect, use the **Sponge Brush** tool (in both **Desaturate** and **Saturate** modes) to remove/boost color in small parts of the scene. If the colorize effect still doesn't work, revert the image to its original state (**Edit**>**Revert**) and try adjusting the contrast using **Levels** (*Ctrl/Cmd + L*) and try again.

Photomerge Panorama

Everyone likes a panorama—which is why smartphones and compact cameras have an inbuilt fully automated panorama feature. These usually work well—I find myself using my iPhone for this all the time because it's so convenient. But if you only ever look at the results produced by a smartphone, and its small screen, you'll never get to fully appreciate what a bunch of high-resolution images and Elements' Photomerge Panorama can offer the serious photographer.

Save a file and display it on a large screen and you'll begin to appreciate how much better multiple high-resolution sections assembled using Photomerge can be. It's a powerful feature.

ait ben haddū kasbah

We all visit beautiful places on our travels, many of which are too large or too majestic to warrant just one snap. A panorama is the perfect answer. **Above: Ait Ben Haddhu**, **Morocco**. This was a five-frame panorama, complete with a black border and Arabic-style text. Architecture is quite hard to stitch together but if it's shot at a reasonable distance, as I was doing here, Elements can usually make a flawless, distortion-free result.

Expansive vistas: This is a six-frame panorama of **Himeji**, Japan's best-preserved castle.

This panorama was taken at the **Imperial War Museum**, **Duxford**, one of the UK's best aviation museums. There were about 10 aircraft, some on the ground, some suspended from the ceiling. Getting a clear shot of just one plane was hard enough, but the entire hangar? The best option was to shoot five frames, then use Elements to stitch them together.

I still create panoramas using a DSLR camera and Photoshop Elements because the finished product is far better than one that's produced with a smartphone—plus, if Elements makes a mistake matching up the different sections, it can usually be fixed.

To stitch together a panorama, Elements must use its AI to line up and match each section. To enable this, the software distorts each frame to make lines, angles, and tones in each section match. When it works well, as it mostly does, this is a very impressive bit of technology.

Panorama shooting and stitching is not a fully automated process; it's best to do a bit of preparation work to set up a panorama. Here's what I suggest:

Step one: With the camera set to **Program** mode, point the lens at the scene and take a **test snap**. Use the **Exposure Compensation** feature on the camera to make the image lighter/darker, if needed.

Step two: If you are happy with the look of the exposure, delete the test and snap a picture of your left foot.

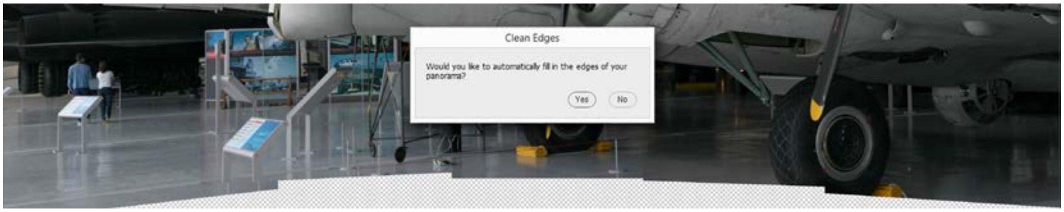
Step three: In your mind, divide the scene very roughly into five vertical sections and start snapping (use more sections if necessary). Start at the left-hand side and take a shot, shift the viewfinder to the right, overlapping the frame by up to 20%, and take a second shot. Repeat until you've covered the entire scene.

Step four: Finally, take another picture, this time of your right foot. This should help you when it comes to finding those panorama sections among all of those other images shot around the same time—which might be months or even years later.

Step five: Open just those sections in Elements.

Step six: Navigate to the **Guided** edit workspace and choose **Photomerge>Photomerge Panorama** from the top of the screen.

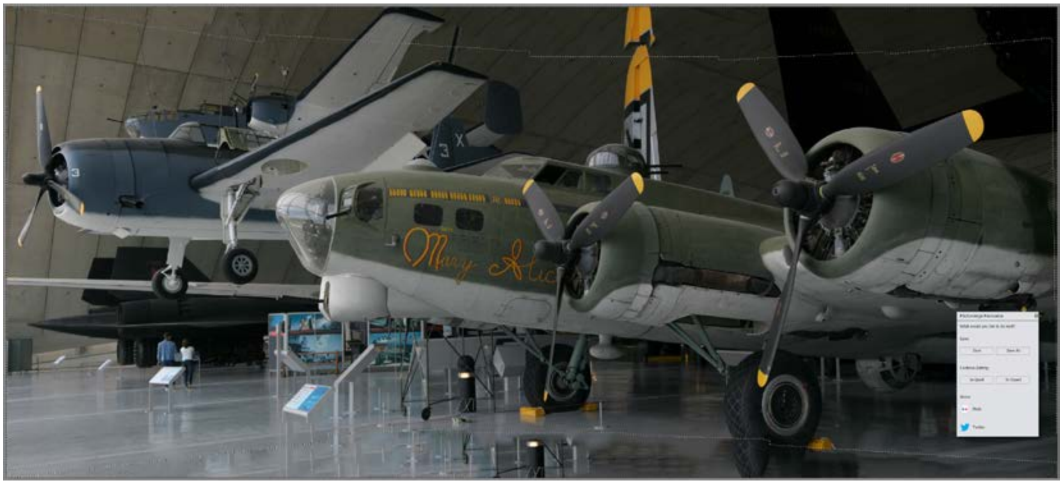
Step seven: Select all of the panorama sections through the **Photo Bin** first, and then click the **Create Panorama** button on the lower right-hand side of the **Photomerge** window. Elements goes into action, selecting all of the images, matching edges, then arranging all of the sections into one widescreen image, blended together using a series of clever black-and-white masks.



Clean Edges

Would you like to automatically fill in the edges of your panorama?

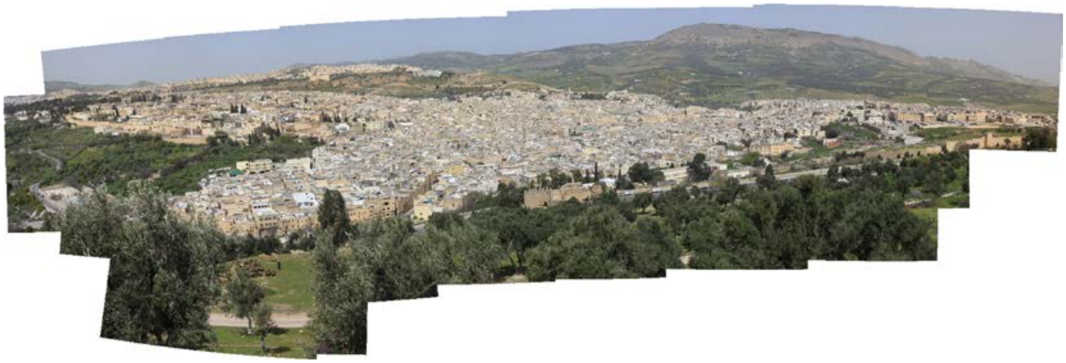
Final steps: At the end of the stitching process, Photomerge will ask whether you want to the blank edges filled. You inevitably get these because the sections were shot using a wide-angle lens or perhaps the software itself has distorted the sections to make a better fit. It's a small price to pay for a perfect panorama. If you click **Yes**, Elements uses its **content-aware AI** to fill the empty spaces with pixels. If you elect not to do this, then you'll have to crop the image to remove any unevenness around the edge. Save the panorama as a Photoshop (`.psd`) file in case you need to come back to it to make final edits. Alternatively, to make it smaller, **flatten** the multiple layers (**Layer>Flatten Image**), then save it as a JPEG file.



The result: Having asked Elements to fill the edges, this screenshot was the result. You can clearly see the dotted selection lines that delineate where Elements has added pixels to the composition. It's a reasonable result - although on closer inspection, there are some weird additional reflections on the floor where there should be none, and the yellow tail fin at the back of the hangar has been copied and pasted above itself. In this example, I used **Edit>Undo** to remove the AI pixels and cropped into the file at the top and bottom. Sometimes this auto fill works a treat, while other times, it doesn't.

Making a multi-deck panorama

One of the problems you will encounter when stitching a panorama is that, if it's too wide, it's nearly impossible to print. Although it might be 48-inches wide, it might only be 8 inches high, especially if all of your sections were shot horizontally. One fun and creative answer to this is to zoom in first, and shoot **multiple decks** so that, even after cropping, the image quality isn't compromised.



City of Fes, Morocco: Don't think that you have to shoot horizontally all of the time. This is like a jigsaw, comprising 37 sections, shot in three decks, from left to right. I love the fact that, although Elements does an amazing job of lining up all of the images near-perfectly, it's not put off by having images at an angle, horizontally, vertically, zoomed in, or shot at wide-angle settings.

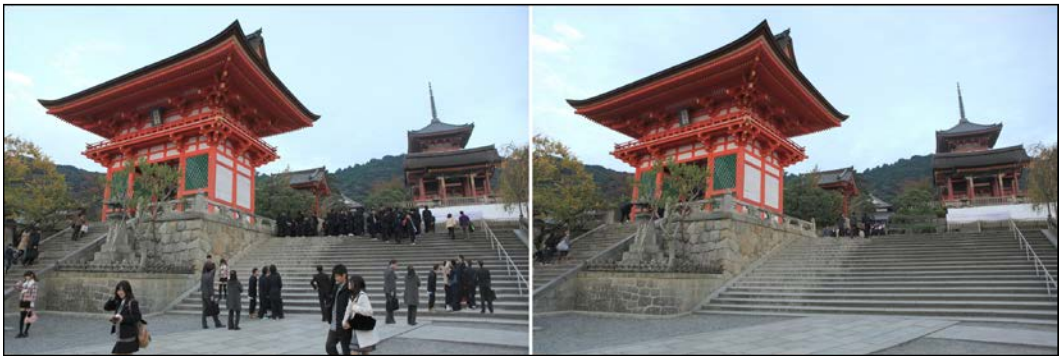
It handles such a challenge with ease (although this took 20 minutes to process). If you think you have missed a section while still in the field, it's best to shoot a few extra frames to cover any possible "bald" patches. I love the randomness of the edges in this technique, so I'm happy to leave them un-cropped for effect. The final version was well over 1 gigabyte and could print over 2 meters wide.

Tips for shooting panoramas:

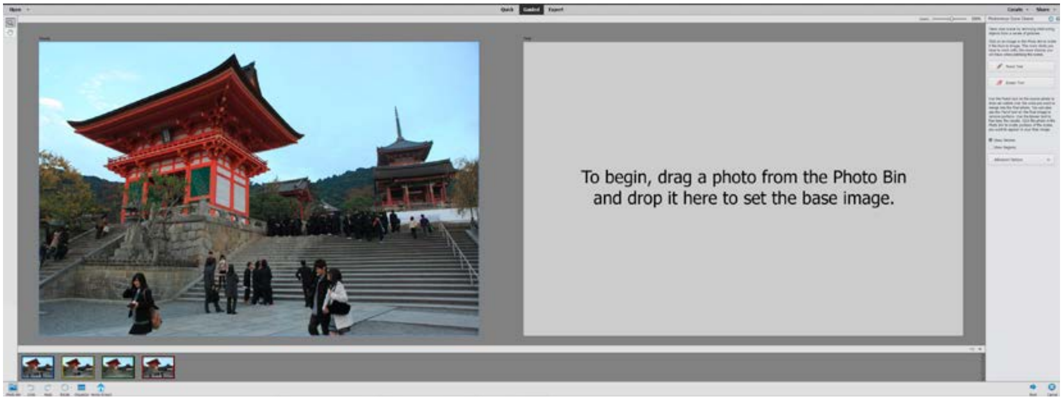
- Always shoot vertically; that way, if you have to crop the image because the sections were not on the same level, it isn't so problematic in terms of the overall proportions of the panorama.
- Use a tripod, making sure that the panning head is 100% level (most tripods have a bubble level built into the tripod head to help with alignment).
- Choose subjects that aren't too close together. Close subjects, especially ones that contain a lot of detail, make it harder for the software to align.
- Zoom in with the lens slightly. It's better to take more shots than fewer wide-angle shots. Wide-angle image will distort, making it tricky for Elements to line up accurately.
- Shoot JPEG or RAW - RAW files will always produce better, but larger files
- **Auto Stitch** will work most of the time but if not, try the other stitching settings to see whether they come out better.

Photomerge Scene Cleaner

Elements began by offering Photomerge Panorama on its own, but within a few versions of Elements, it came up with a number of other useful applications for Photomerge, including the ability to remove random people and objects to "clean up" a busy scene with relative ease.

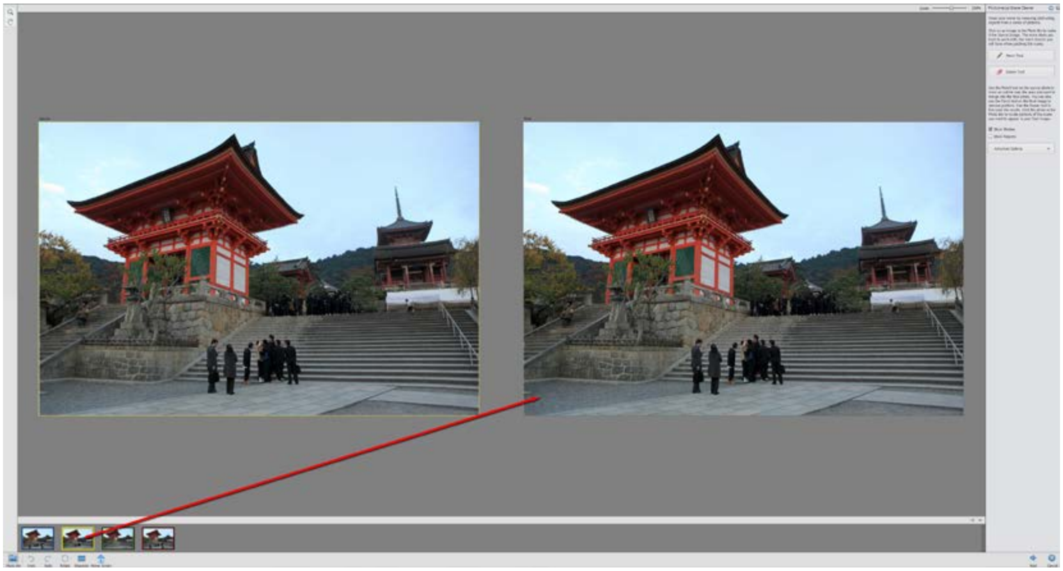


Busy or clean? The **Scene Cleaner** is an efficient, automated copy-and-paste feature designed to clean up heavily populated and cluttered scenes with the least amount of hassle. But it only works if you take multiple images of the same scene at the same time.

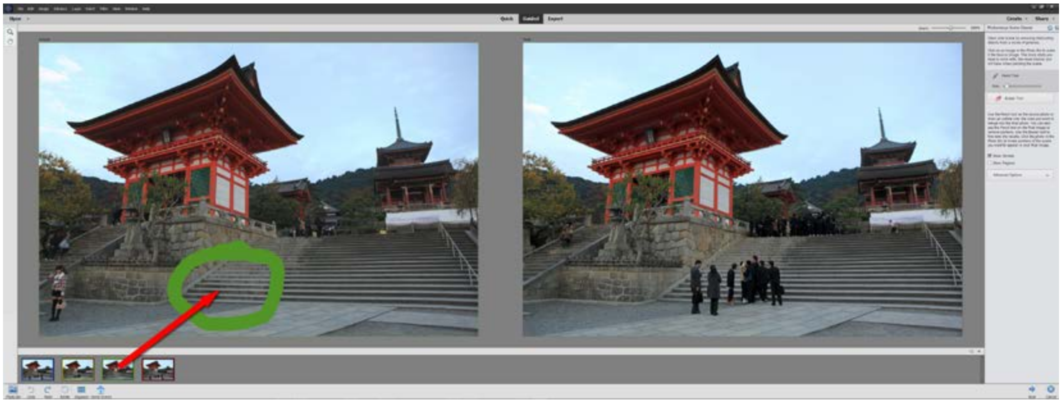


To begin, drag a photo from the Photo Bin and drop it here to set the base image.

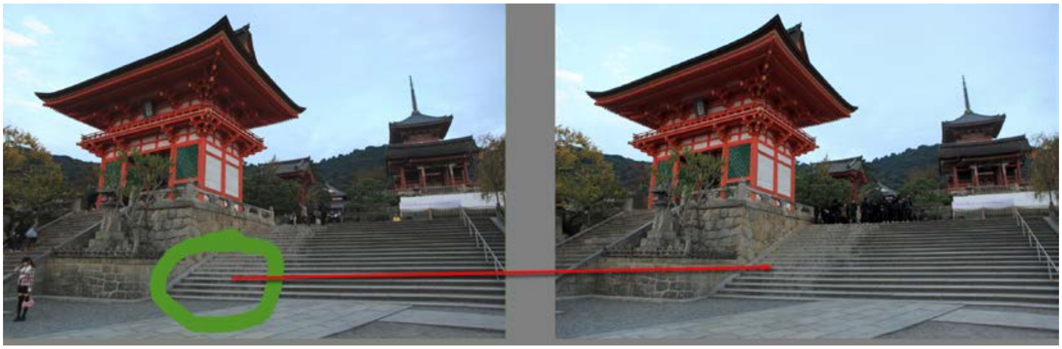
Step one is to open all the images shot on location and open **Photomerge Scene Cleaner** from the **Guided** menu. Scene Cleaner has its own separate panel showing one image on the left and an empty space on the right. Choose the best image from the thumbnails along the base of the screen and click-drag it to the left-hand window. This becomes your "base" image. In fact, as with all the features in **Guided** Edit, just follow the excellent onscreen prompts and you are good to go.



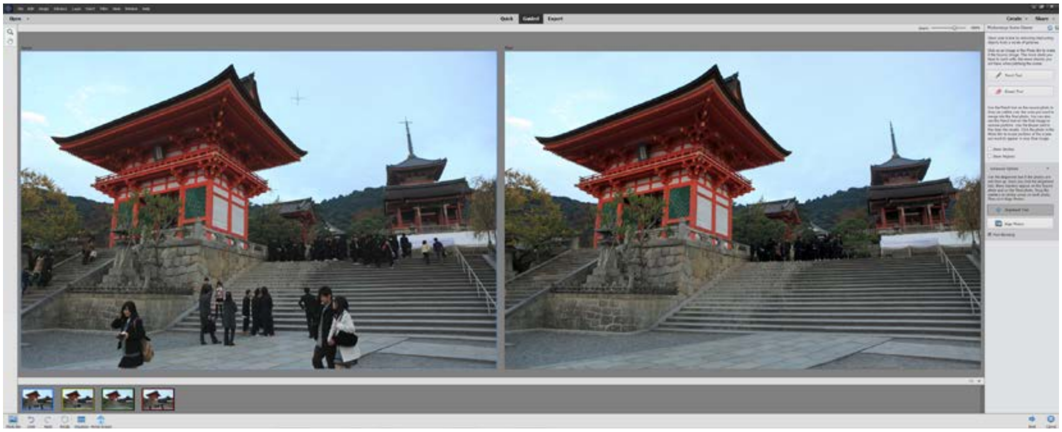
Step two: In this screenshot, you can see that I have dragged the second image from the **Photo Bin** to the right-hand pane - this is to be my "base" image. Note also that it's the same shot as on the LHS - this is a mistake; I need to find a different shot that has a gap where the businessmen are currently standing so as to clean them from the right-hand screen. Note also that Elements color codes everything - this is a brilliant bit of design, which should become evident once you begin to grab bits from different pictures to clean the scene. The four sections are color coded: blue, yellow, green, and red.



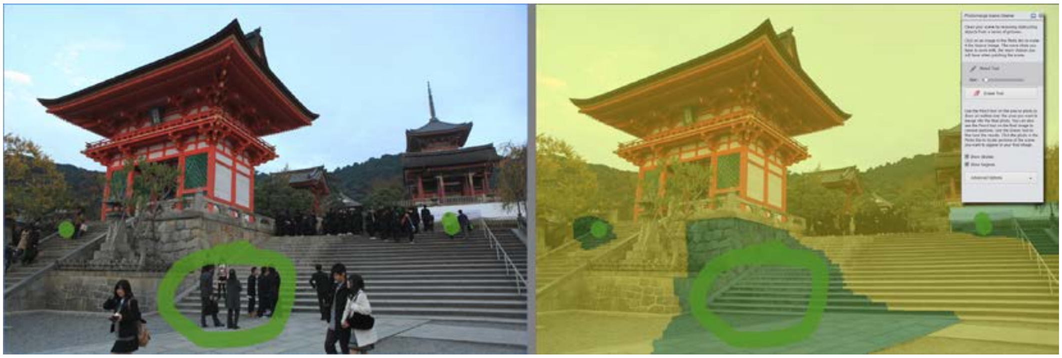
Step three: The new image I have chosen (for the left-hand source) has no one standing where the businessmen are on the right-hand side. Take the **Pencil** tool from the right-hand menu and draw around this empty space (here it's in thick green ink because it's from the green-coded image). Although it states it's a pencil tool, it's actually a **selection tool**.



Step four - Now the magic starts: The pixels encompassed by the green circle are automatically copied, pasted, and blended into the right-hand scene, effectively covering up the businessmen. I think this is one of the coolest features in Guided because you don't have to have any experience with selection tools, blending, feathering - or editing for that matter. It just does it. You can see my green pencil line is rather fat and crooked, yet the application handles the transfer of pixels wonderfully (we'll look at exactly how selections work in much greater detail in *Chapter 6: Advanced Techniques: Retouching, Selections and Text*).



Step five - cleaning up the rest of the scene: The next frame I chose had no one on the steps at the far left, so, a quick scribble with the **Pencil** tool and the girl climbing the steps in the right-hand image is gone. You will very quickly come to realize whether you have shot enough frames for this technique to work - I could have shot a lot more base frames on location but I was not prepared to wait 20 minutes for the gang of schoolkids at the top of the steps to move. Even as it is, the scene has become far less populated with people. If you like the result, press **Next** (bottom right of the screen) and save the file. If it needs fine-tuning, move on to the next step.

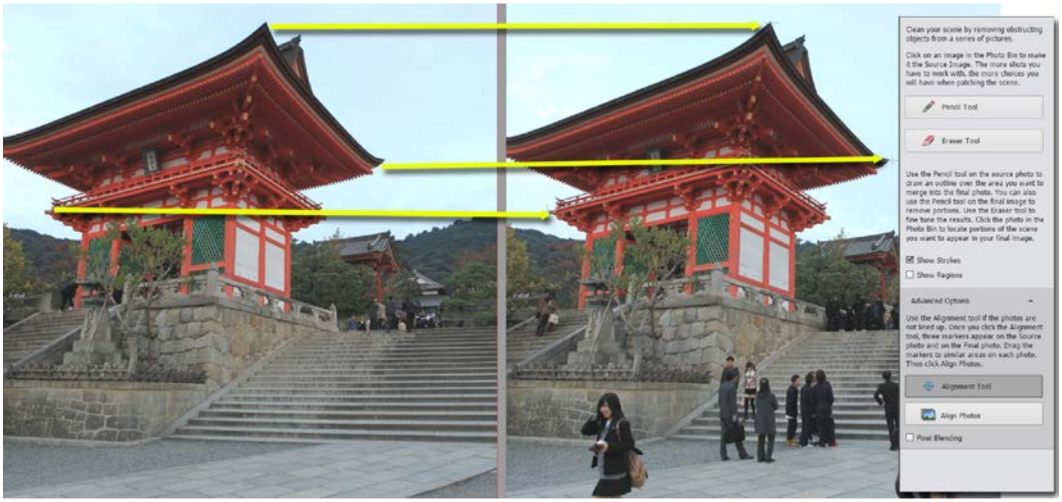


Step six - color coding to the rescue: I mentioned color-coded images before. This applies to all the images being used for this scene-cleaning operation. The colors appear around the thumbnails in the Photo Bin and match the color of the pencil marks. But if you click the **Show Regions** checkbox (on the right-hand menu), Elements highlights the bit of the picture that has been copied and pasted to that right-hand frame. This is incredibly handy if you are working on multiple frames and need to go back over the copy and paste process to fine-tune your selections. To do this, identify the area in question on the right, then double-click the left-hand color thumbnail to bring it back into the main left-hand window. I use this a lot when the cleaning operation is not going well. Typically, what happens is that the selection grabs too much, so I go back to the source on the left-hand side and, using the **Eraser** tool, rub out some of the pen marks so it grabs fewer pixels. If this doesn't work, I erase the original lines entirely and start again using a much thinner pencil tip. You can also just add a blob to the image - which will grab an even smaller selection. Bear in mind that this is a bit of a rough-and-ready process - I doubt you could copy and paste someone's eyes from one image to another using this tool - it's too fine a job (but you could do this using a tool called **Open Closed Eyes**; see *Chapter 7*, *Additional Tools and Features*).

Velbon
Velbon ULTRA TR 663D

Shooting tip:

I know most folks consider a tripod an unnecessary hassle - but carrying one for this kind of photography can make a significant difference to the clarity, and accuracy, of scenes shot for the Scene Cleaner process - or any other Photomerge feature. Plus, it's useful for a range of other shooting scenarios - such as landscape, still life, and sport. These days, you can buy carbon fiber tripods that are a fraction of the weight of the older-style aluminum tripods. Many are designed to pack away into a small package, making them perfect for travel. This particular tripod is fitted with a ball and socket head - you only need to adjust one knob to move the camera in any direction - a huge advantage over the older pan-and-tilt heads. Note also that it has twist-lock legs. These are far superior to the more common lever lock style because they are streamlined - whereas lever lock legs tend to snag on everything, thus raising the frustration level of the user!



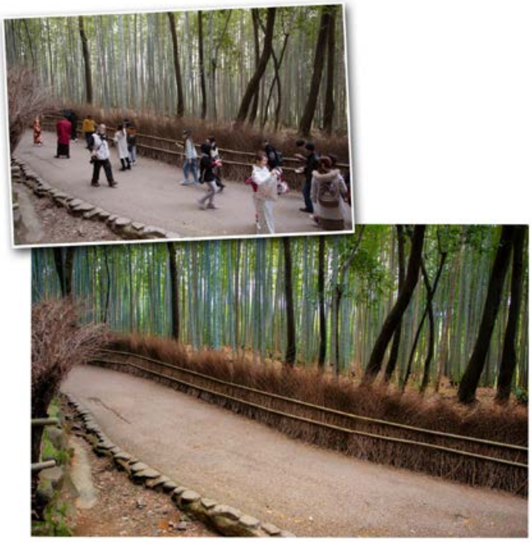
Clean your scene by removing obstructing objects from a series of pictures.

Click on an image in the Photo Bin to make it the Source Image. The more shots you have to work with, the more choices you will have when patching the scene.

Use the Pencil tool on the source photo to draw an outline over the area you want to merge into the final photo. You can also use the Pencil tool on the final image to remove portions. Use the Eraser tool to fine tune the results. Click the photo in the Photo Bin to locate portions of the scene you want to appear in your final image.

Use the Alignment tool if the photos are not lined up. Once you click the Alignment tool, three markers appear on the Source photo and on the Final photo. Drag the markers to similar areas on each photo. Then click Align Photos.

Lining up features: Another impossibly good feature of all Photomerge tools is the software's ability to line images up so that when you copy pixels from one frame and paste them over another, they paste over the correct spot, thus producing a realistic-looking result - as if they were shot using a tripod. Elements does this automatically and you might even notice that the finished image needs cropping a little because, due to the automatic line-up process, some of the originals have shifted from the vertical or horizontal. If the auto alignment process is not working, you can use the cute **Alignment** tool. As you might deduce from the illustration here, the way this works is to add three line-up **target symbols** in the left hand frame on specific, non-moving parts of the image (I chose the roof line of the pagoda), then it repeats the process on exactly the same places in the right-hand frame. Click **Align Images** and Elements works its magic - usually very accurately.



The trick with the **Scene Cleaner** is to remember to shoot the raw material - multiple frames of the same scene over a time period—while you are on location. However, unlike panorama sections, the idea is to position yourself quietly in one place without moving and snap between three and five shots of the same scene over a short period of time, ensuring that people move in between frames.

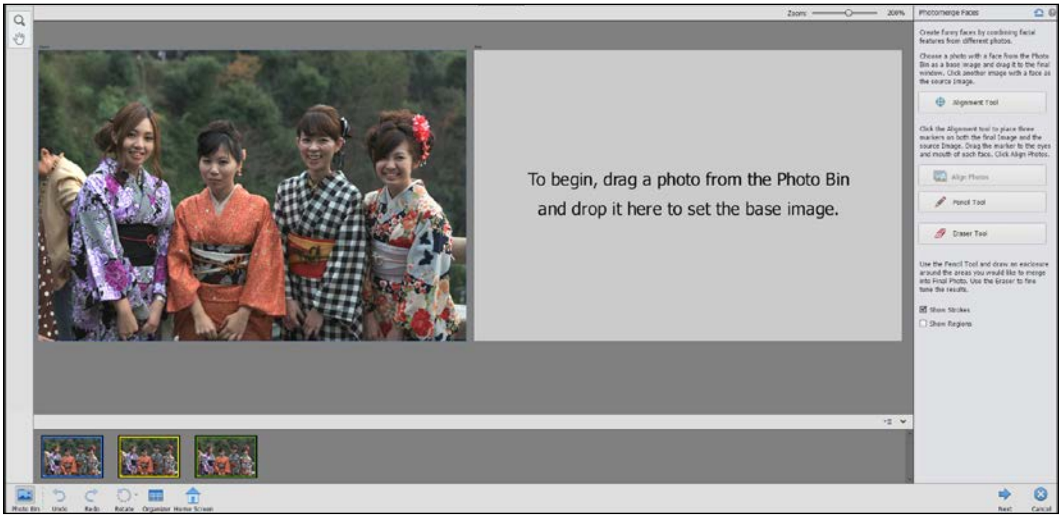
Left: Kyoto's famous Sagano bamboo grove with and without crowds of tourists thanks to the Photomerge Scene Cleaner.

Photomerge Faces

Ever taken a snap of friends only to discover, after they have all gone, that one of them is looking in the wrong direction or has their eyes closed?

This is a common photo-taking error that many of us will have experienced at one time or another. Before Photoshop Elements came along, the only way to remedy this was to get your friends back together to reshoot, or to spend time selecting, copying, and pasting figures from one picture to another. This was a time-consuming and complex process, so most people didn't bother.

By leveraging the power of the Photomerge AI technology, Elements has three fantastic features: **Photomerge Faces**, **Photomerge Compose**, and **Photomerge Group Shot,** all designed to fix compositional errors, however heinous they might first appear. The **Faces** tool enables you to remove a face from one image and transfer it to another, all without the need for making complex selections or masks - in much the same way that the Scene Cleaner works when copying and pasting one part of the shot over another. You'll find these features next to Photomerge Panorama in **Guided** Edit mode.



To begin, drag a photo from the Photo Bin and drop it here to set the base image.

Create funny faces by combining facial features from different photos.

Choose a photo with a face from the Photo Bin as a base image and drag it to the final window. Click another image with a face as the source image.

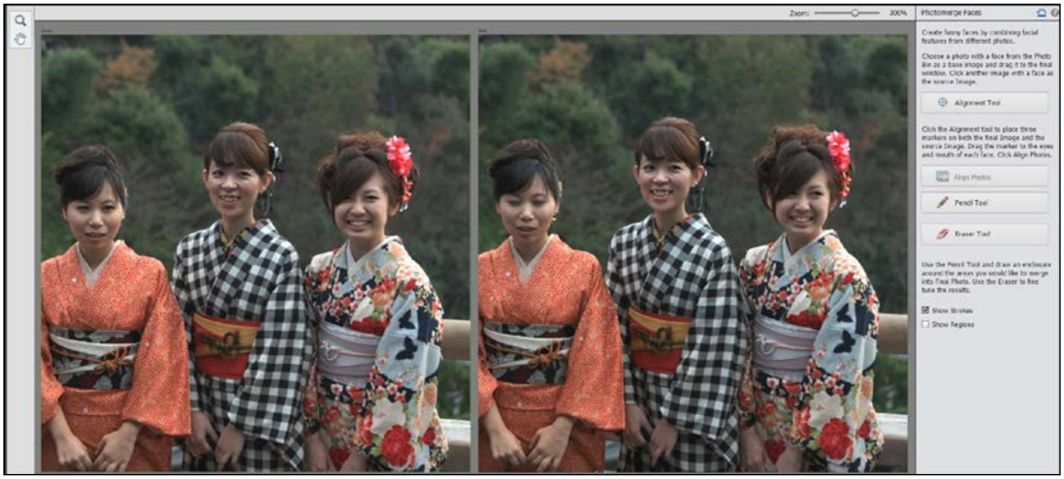
Click the Alignment tool to place three markers on both the final Image and the source Image. Drag the marker to the eyes and mouth of each face. Click Align Photos.

Use the Pencil Tool and draw an enclosure around the areas you would like to merge into Final Photo. Use the Eraser to fine tune the results.

☑ Show Strokes
☐ Show Regions

Step one: Upon starting **Photomerge Faces**, two windows appear. The right-hand window contains the *master* or base image – in other words, the best shot. First off, identify the best photograph and drag it from the **Photo Bin** into the right-hand window, as shown in the following screenshot. Double-clicking any one of the thumbnails in the Photo Bin will load it into the left-hand pane. This is the source image, from which we can select a better facial expression, angle, or overall look.

The only proviso with this feature is that you must have more than one image of the group available. (If you're using the more specific Photomerge Faces function, you'll need a second or third face to copy and paste.) I generally advise anyone shooting snaps of their family to use the camera's drive mode and to take at least two or three images because someone is bound to have their eyes closed or be looking away when the shutter is pressed.



Create funny faces by combining facial features from different photos.

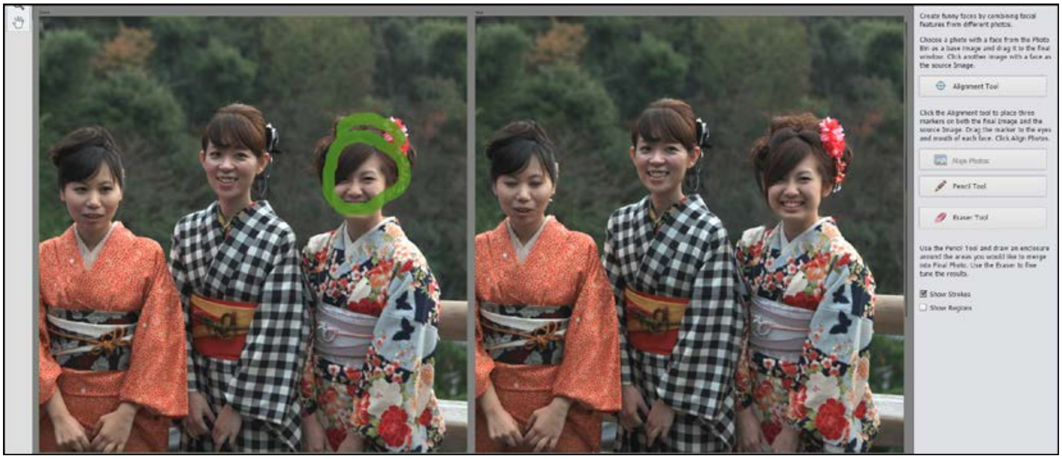
Choose a photo with a face from the Photo Bin as a base image and drag it to the final window. Click another image with a face as the source Image.

Click the Alignment tool to place three markers on both the final Image and the source Image. Drag the marker to the eyes and mouth of each face. Click Align Photos.

Use the Pencil Tool and draw an enclosure around the areas you would like to merge into Final Photo. Use the Eraser to fine tune the results.

☑ Show Strokes
☐ Show Regions

Step two: Here's what I considered to be the best shot on the right-hand side, but as you can see, the woman on the extreme right is looking off to her left while the woman in the orange kimono is looking down. I just caught them at the wrong moment. The image on the left has a better version of the woman on the right-hand side.



Create funny faces by combining facial features from different photos.

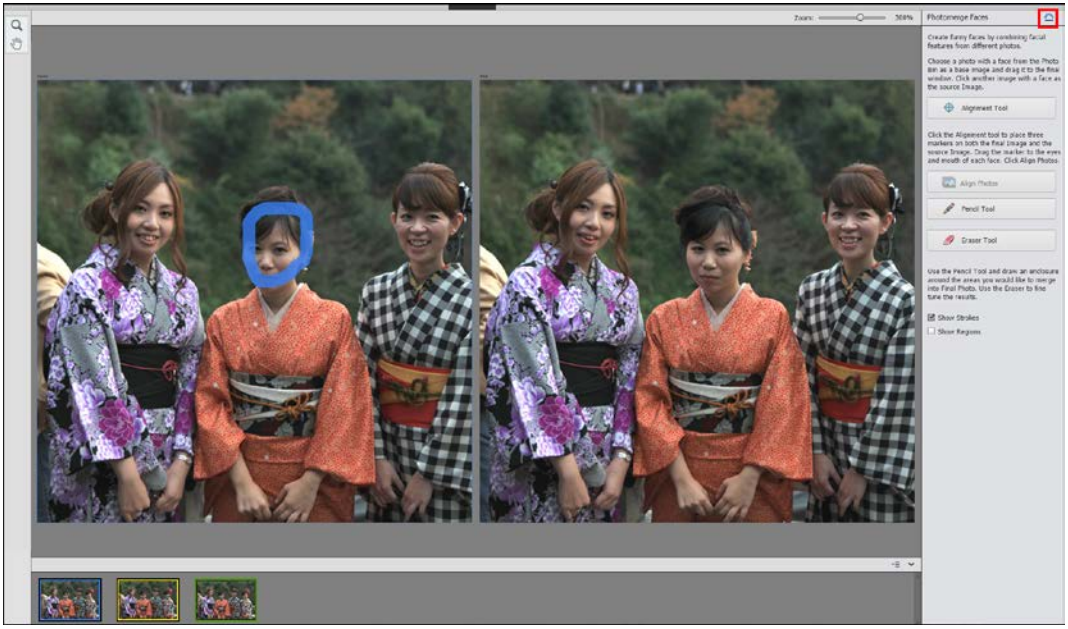
Choose a photo with a face from the Photo Bin as a base image and drag it to the final window. Click another image with a face as the source Image.

Click the Alignment tool to place three markers on both the final Image and the source Image. Drag the marker to the eyes and mouth of each face. Click Align Photos.

Use the Pencil Tool and draw an enclosure around the areas you would like to merge into Final Photo. Use the Eraser to fine tune the results.

☑ Show Strokes
☐ Show Regions

As with **Photomerge Scene Cleaner** and **Photomerge Group Shot**, all that's needed is to draw around the "good" face or figure in the left-hand window and it copies and pastes into the right-hand window, hopefully in perfect registration, so it replaces the person's face seamlessly, rather than sitting to one side (which happens if the two images are not aligned correctly). I had to add a bit extra to the pencil line to ensure the top of her head was copied over completely.



Create funny faces by combining facial features from different photos.

Choose a photo with a face from the Photo Bin as a base image and drag it to the final window. Click another image with a face as the source Image.

Click the Alignment tool to place three markers on both the final Image and the source Image. Drag the marker to the eyes and mouth of each face. Click Align Photos.

Use the Pencil Tool and draw an enclosure around the areas you would like to merge into Final Photo. Use the Eraser to fine tune the results.

☑ Show Strokes

☐ Show Regions

Fine-tuning the final result: The amazing part of this process is that you don't need to be 100% accurate. Simply sketch a mark in the area you want to copy, and Elements will transfer that marked area over to the image in the right-hand window. If only part of the face is transferred, draw around the **donor face** a bit more and wait for the update. It's an amazing process to watch, but this tool will only work if you remember to take additional shots when in the field. Note also that sometimes it makes sense to work with a thinner pencil line or even just add dabs of color. The auto selection process is quite generous, sometimes a bit too generous, so you'll find yourself going back again and again to trim down the line to reduce the amount selected. As with all the Photomerge products, Elements uses a cleverly designed color-coding system that allows you to identify where each face comes from. This feature is not important when you're working with a small number of images, but if you're working with the maximum of 10, you'll find the coding very helpful.

Tip—perfecting the process:

- Use the effective **Alignment tool** if multiple images don't line up precisely. This is an excellent feature and makes the subsequent face replacement process much more accurate.

- Use the program's **Eraser** tool if you overdraw around an object and too much copies across.

- Use the **Show Regions** checkbox to highlight, in the aligned color, what has been copied into the right-hand pane, and from which image.

- If the software is copying too much in one hit, try just dabbing the **Pencil** tool onto the source image. A single brush tip mark might be all it needs to work optimally.

- Don't forget, you can also use this feature to create funny results, copying and pasting heads onto the wrong bodies. Your family snaps might never be the same again!

- Use the **Reset** button (top right of the screen, in red) if it all goes horribly wrong - and start over.

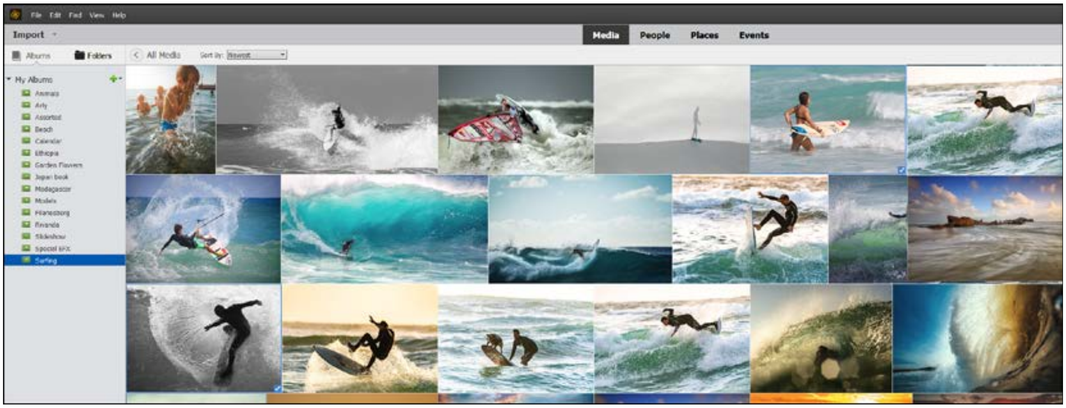
Slideshows

A slideshow in Elements is not quite what I was used to as a child when my parents would drag out the Kodak projector and the old screen to go over the various snaps that were taken that summer holiday. A slideshow these days is a multimedia event, normally presented as a video file that can be replayed on a computer or uploaded to a range of social media sites.

If you already have images in your **Organizer**, and you look at the home page, chances are you'll see that Elements has already created a slideshow through its **Auto Creations feature.**

Making a slideshow in Elements is quick and easy. Previous versions featured a far more sophisticated slideshow-making utility, but it was both complex and time-consuming to use. This version has been dumbed down almost a bit too much—if you want a greater level of creativity, you'd have to go to a specialist slideshow package. This utility is not very sophisticated, but it's easy and fast.

Save and Export: The menu on the right-hand side of the slideshow screen allows you to save the file with a unique name. Next to that is the **Export** option—use this to send the video to a folder somewhere on your computer (such as **Export to Local Disk**) or upload directly to Vimeo or YouTube.

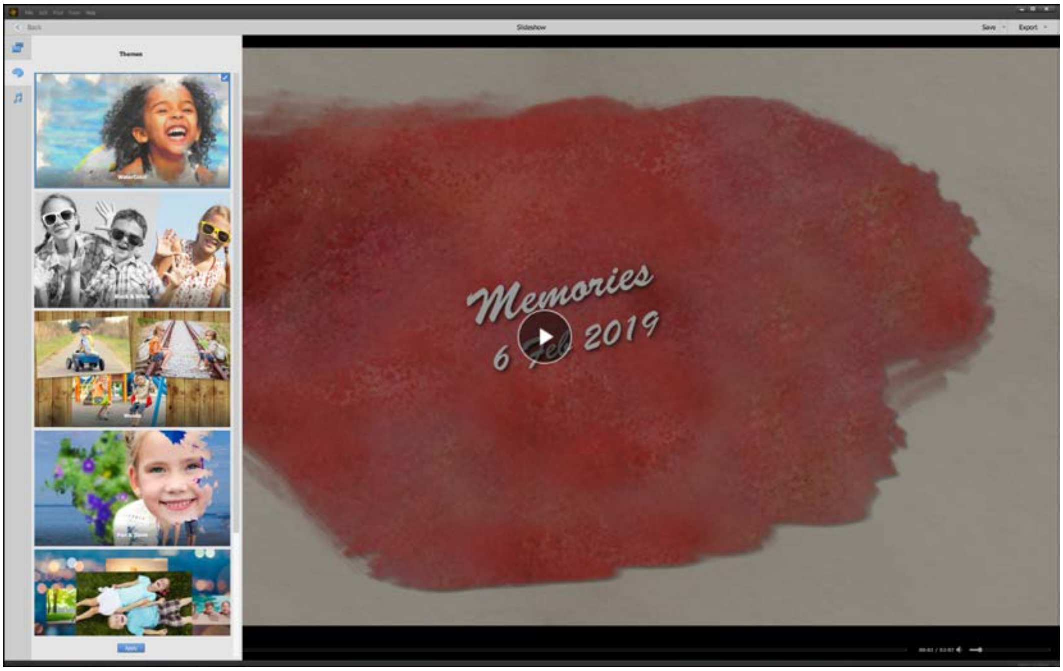

File
Edit
Find
View
Help
Import
Media
People
Places
Events
Albums
Folders
All Media
Sort By:
My Albums
Animals
Arty
Assorted
Beach
Calendar
Ethiopia
Garden Flowers
Japan book
Madagascar
Models
Rwanda
Slideshow
Special EFX
Surfing

Here's how to create a simple but effective slideshow in only a few minutes:

Step one: Select the pictures you want to include. Because of its final video format, it's best to choose **horizontally orientated images**.

Step two: Best practice would be to create a specific **album** in the **Organizer** for your slideshow images.

Step three: Select all of the images (you can always add or delete images later).
Step four: With the images selected in **Organizer**, click the **Slideshow** button at the bottom of the page, or go to the **Create** menu (top right) and choose **Slideshow** from there—it's the same process.



Immediate feedback: The slideshow renders almost immediately as a preview. You might have to wait a minute or so, depending on how many photos you have included. Once rendered, it then automatically plays. If you don't like the music or the theme Elements chooses, pause the slideshow and access the tiny menu at the top left-hand side of the slideshow screen. There are eight different themes to choose from, and several copyright-free music tracks to select. You can also use this menu to import more images, video clips, and sound clips, where needed. Right-clicking any thumbnail allows you to remove or rotate that particular slide. There's also a tiny checkbox for adding captions to each slide. When you play the slideshow, these captions animate into the frame, a nice touch.

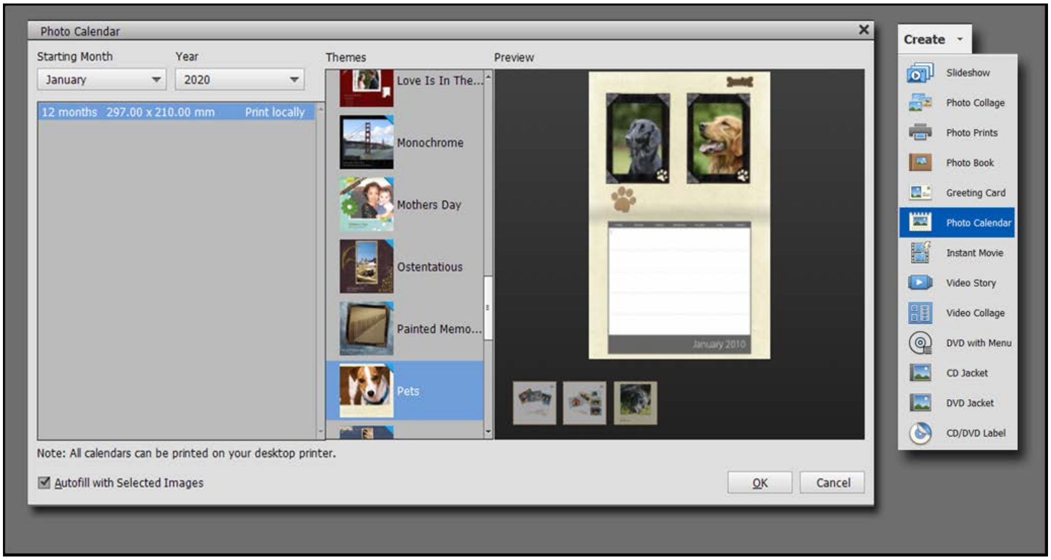
Copyright Alert: If you plan on publishing the slideshow video into the public domain, note that it shouldn't contain any images, music, or video that are not your own. There are plenty of free image and music sources online where you can download completely copyright-free material for use in personal, and in some cases, commercial, projects.

Because most of Elements' project-based features are semi-automated or powered using Adobe Sensei (AI), once one project is mastered, almost everything else seems far easier. Let's move on and see how easy it is to make calendars and greeting cards.

Creating calendars

A calendar is a marvelous gift for family, friends, and even work colleagues. What's more, it's also a great way to show off your prowess as a photographer, and creating a calendar has never been easier. Once again, Adobe has packed some incredibly complex imaging actions into a simple-to-understand, single-click operation, and on the whole, it works very well.

My only niggle with this particular offering is that the available theme templates haven't really been updated for several versions of the application—I'd like to see better variety; maybe in the next release?



Starting Month: January
Year: 2020
12 months 297.00 x 210.00 mm Print locally

Note: All calendars can be printed on your desktop printer.

☑ Autofill with Selected Images

Photo Calendar
Themes
Preview
Love Is In The...
Monochrome
Mothers Day
Ostentatious
Painted Memo...
Pets
January 2010
OK
Cancel
Create
Slideshow
Photo Collage
Photo Prints
Photo Book
Greeting Card
Photo Calendar
Instant Movie
Video Story
Video Collage
DVD with Menu
CD Jacket
DVD Jacket
CD/DVD Label

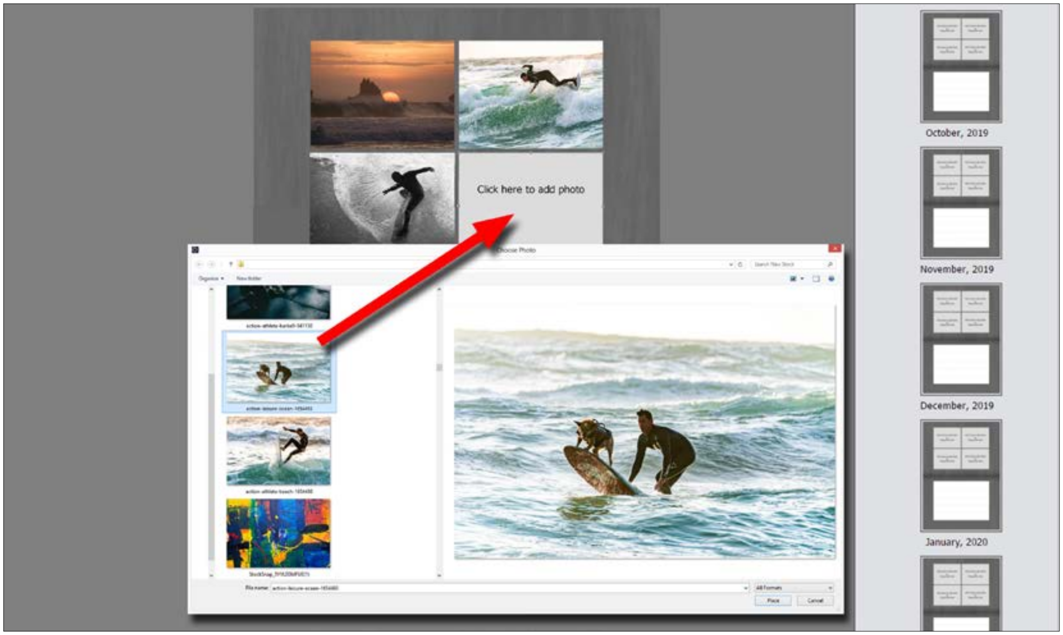
Step one: Like most creative projects in Elements, it pays to sort through your work and create an **Album** in the **Additional** tools and features for your calendar pictures.

Step two: Choose **Photo Calendar** from the **Create** drop-down menu, at the top right-hand side of the Organizer, and check out the range of calendar styles presented in the next stage.

Step three (above): Pick out a **design style**. I think this is one of the weak points of the calendar-making process. It's very hard to see exactly what you get with each of the designs because they are so small. Monitor resolution has steadily climbed over the past 5 years, but the preview window remains painfully small!

Tip:

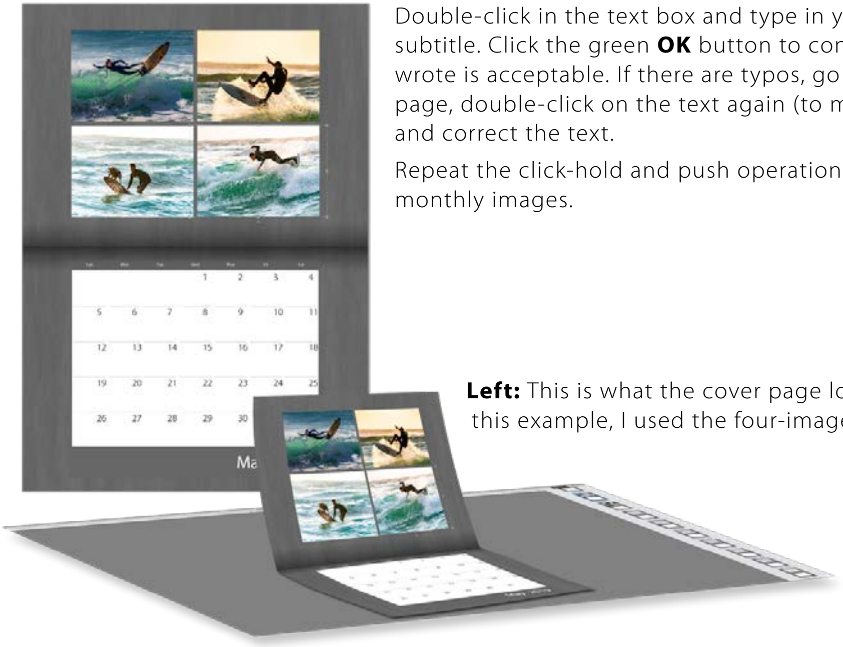
Choose one of the 31 layouts, set the start month and year, and click **OK**, making sure that the **Auto Fill with Selected Images** checkbox is unchecked. It's simple enough to load the right pictures onto the correct pages later. (You might have to wait a while as the templates for that particular design physically download from Adobe.)


Click here to add photo
Choose Photo
October, 2019
November, 2019
December, 2019
January, 2020

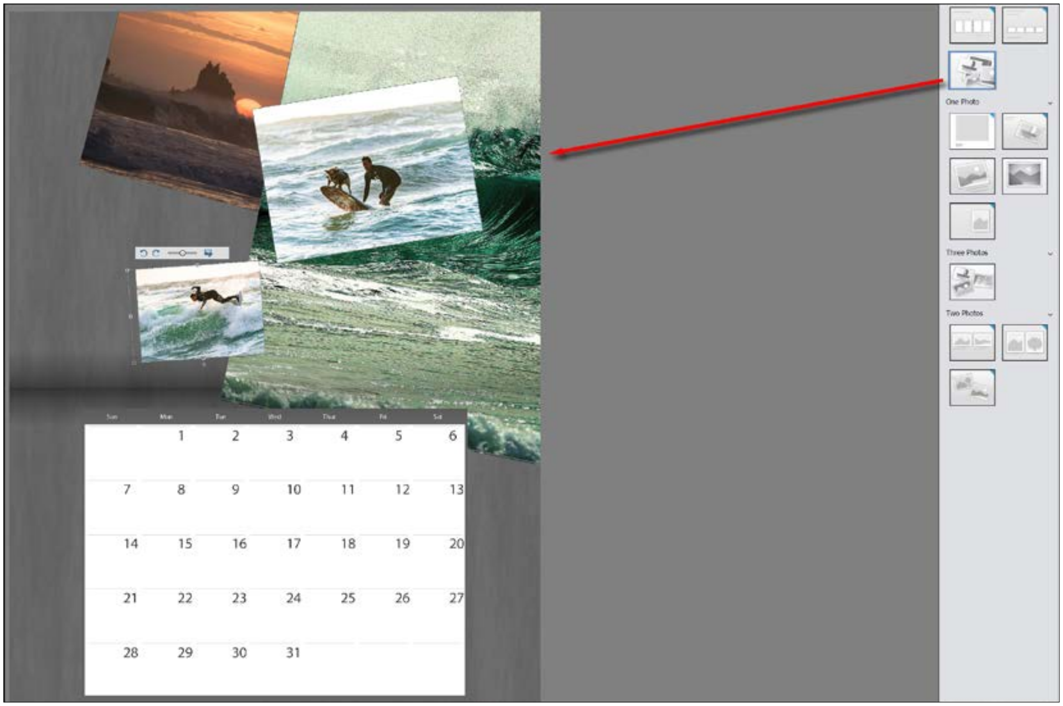
Step four: Start by navigating to the front cover if it's not already on the main screen. If you have taken the time to put your calendar-bound images into an album, you'll see the images at the base of the page in the Photo Bin. Click-hold and push an image into the gray image holder. It automatically resizes and rotates to fit whatever shape the image template is for that calendar design.

Double-click in the text box and type in your title and subtitle. Click the green **OK** button to confirm what you wrote is acceptable. If there are typos, go back to the page, double-click on the text again (to make it active), and correct the text.

Repeat the click-hold and push operation for the other monthly images.



Left: This is what the cover page looks like - in this example, I used the four-image block layout.



Step five - customize: If you don't like the **number of images** on a particular page or the **photo orientation**, they can easily be changed by opening the **Layouts** panel, in either the **Advanced** or the **Basic** window.

Once there, replace what's being used with a new design by double-clicking the thumbnail in the panel. It's easy. You can do this for one image, or for all of them. You can even get into the complexities of manipulating the individual layers in **Advanced** mode but that's, well, advanced, and not for this chapter.

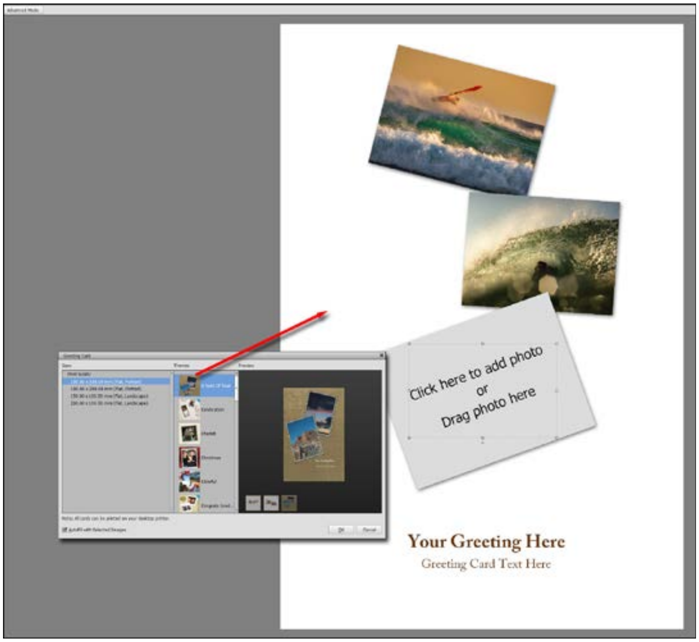
Once the calendar is complete, save the file; it's ready for printing. You can do this on a regular photo inkjet printer—12 pages, plus a cover page—then take it down to your local office supplies shop to get it **spiral bound**, ready to send off to your friends or family.

Tip:

Working with text in Elements is not as easy as, say, Microsoft Word or Apple Pages, especially if you are adding more than a few comments to any Elements project or document. The best way to work with text is to create your document in whatever your favourite text editor might be, then copy and paste the content from the word processing application into Elements. One good point to this is that most, if not all, of your formatting will copy over to Elements, which will be a great time-saver.

Simple greeting cards

To make a greeting card, the process is almost identical to that of the calendar, except that you are making one page, not 12. Image placement and proportions are controlled through the menu.



Step one: To make a greeting card, arrange a few images into an Organizer **Album**.
Step two: Select one, two, or three images from this album (depending on how many you'd like to put into the card) and choose **Greeting Card** from the **Create** menu.

Step three: From the tiny design menu that opens (on the left), choose a style and click **OK**. It's actually hard to see exactly what you are getting from this tiny menu, so it might be more a case of trial and error until you hit on a design that you can work with.

Working tips:

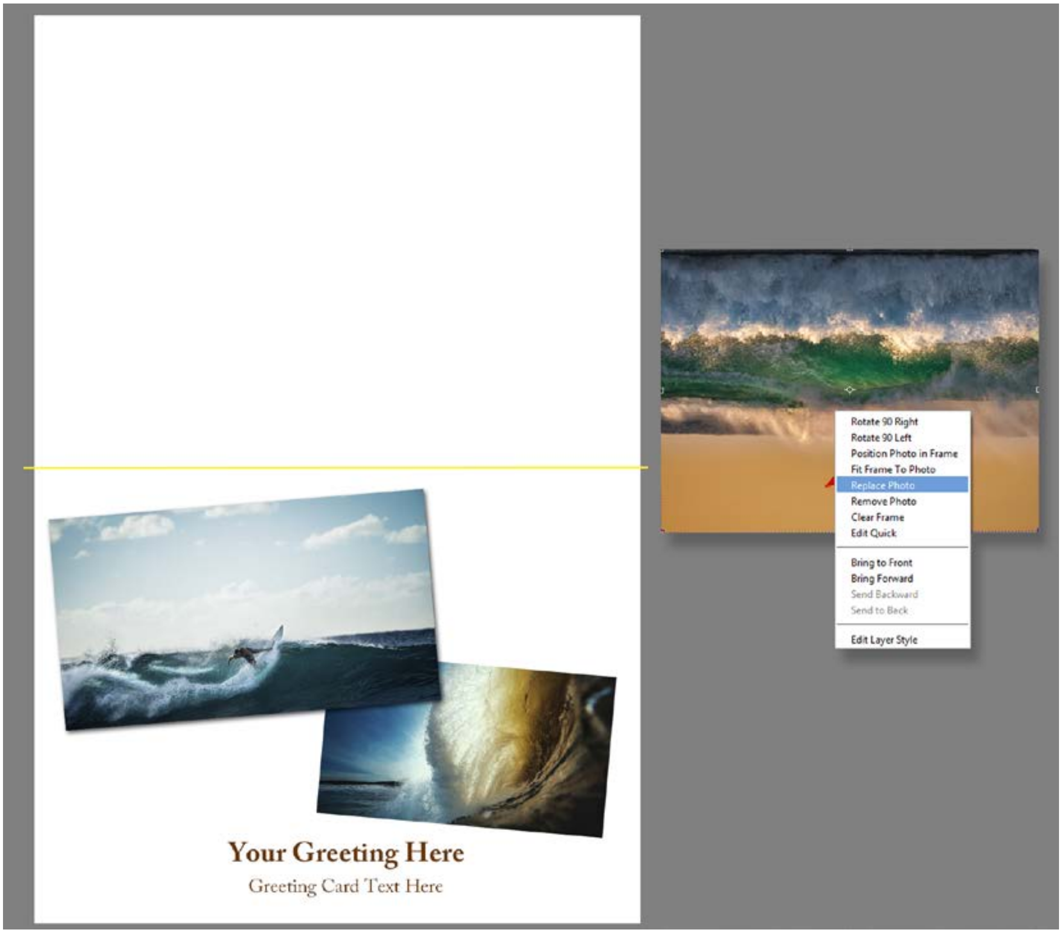
I have a few problems with using this particular utility - to begin, it's only designed for single-sided printing. I think this is probably because not everyone has a home inkjet printer that can duplex print (that is, print on both sides of the paper) but most of the templates are more like flyers than cards.

- As mentioned, the tiny window illustrating the card styles is both very small while its content is, in my opinion, very dated. For this reason, I think it's far better to make your own card designs manually.

- If I were to use this, I'd only place one or two images into the design and add them to the bottom half so that, once printed and folded in half, the front is where the image is and the back is blank.

- Use a matt inkjet paper - this produces excellent color results - but it's also the best surface to bend and score flat. Some of the glossy papers, although more luxuriant in their thickness, are far harder to fold neatly.

- I suggest either using a blunt knife to score the spine prior to folding or using a professional card bending tool (usually found in a craft store).


Rotate 90 Right
Rotate 90 Left
Position Photo in Frame
Fit Frame To Photo
Replace Photo
Remove Photo
Clear Frame
Edit Quick
Bring to Front
Bring Forward
Send Backward
Send to Back
Edit Layer Style
Your Greeting Here
Greeting Card Text Here

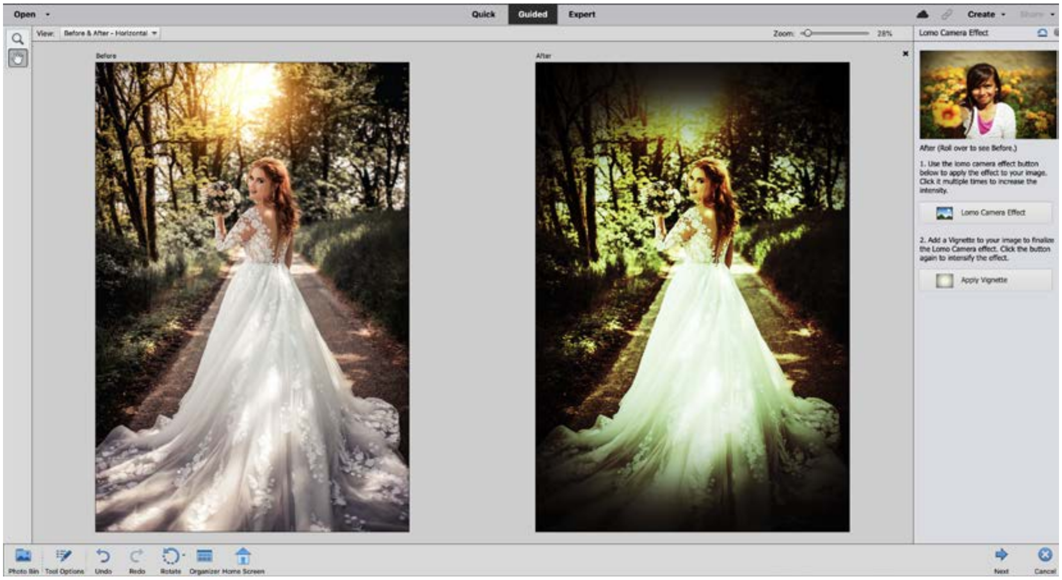
Step four: Once your chosen design has downloaded, try shuffling the images around if they have auto-loaded into the wrong part of the card. Do this by right-clicking the image itself and either choose **Replace Photo** or **Delete** and find a replacement (above right).

Step five: Move the image holders to the best position. If you're printing these at home, you need to bear in mind the **fold line** through the center (here in yellow). The Adobe designs run the images over the middle of the document, which can be annoying if you want to fold it in half. I deleted the one at the top, then moved the other two below the half-way line using the **Move** tool.

Note that, if you mouse just to the outer edges of any image, the double-headed arrow changes into a **rotating arrow**—meaning that you can click, hold, and drag the orientation of the image to a different **rotational value**. Use the green tick (check) button to confirm your image movement before moving on. Save. When you save one of these projects, it creates a unique file format (.PSE). This type of file holds all the information in one place - text, images, clip art, color. Unlike the Photoshop file format, PSE files are only readable in Elements. The only other format that this can be saved as is **PDF**, which is universally readable.

Lomo Camera Effect

I saw my first Lomo camera in a **GUM** store in Warsaw, shortly after the Berlin Wall had come down in 1990. It was, in fact, the only camera on sale in that huge store and it piqued my interest. Lomo cameras were made in the Lomo factory in St. Petersberg (along with a lot of other specialized optics - for telescopes, cine cameras, microscopes, and more). Its 35 mm **Lomo LC-A** film camera was adopted by a group of enthusiast photographers who used to take pictures almost randomly - from all manner of angles, locations, and subjects. **Lomography**, as it is called, often spawned huge exhibitions of images mass-printed and displayed almost like wallpaper. The Lomography movement started in Vienna in the '90s and continues today, although not with quite the mass appeal of the last century. Elements' **Lomo Camera Effect** produces a soft, heavily vignetted effect similar to that produced by the LC-A, the **Diana** toy camera, and many more unsophisticated types of film cameras, typically with few features other than a plastic lens—you can still find a lot of these iconic toys online today.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 28%
Before
After
Lomo Camera Effect
Lomo Camera Effect
Apply Vignette
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

After (Roll over to see Before.)

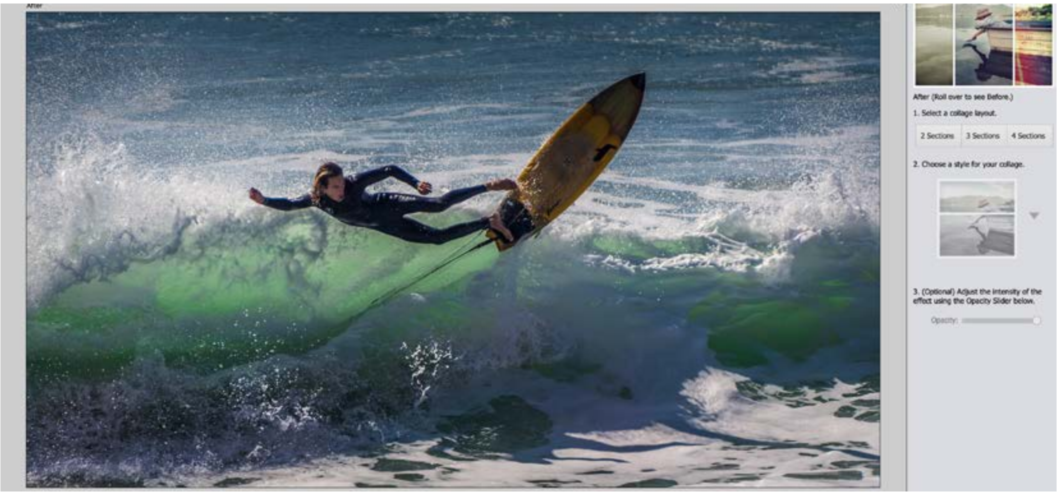
1. Use the lomo camera effect button below to apply the effect to your image. Click it multiple times to increase the intensity.

2. Add a Vignette to your image to finalize the Lomo Camera effect. Click the button again to intensify the effect.

Although you can reproduce this kind of heavy vignette look using selections and other tone-changing tools, **Guided** Edit's **Lomo Camera Effect** is by far the easiest and most effective way of adding a cool look to almost any style of image. Click the **Lomo Camera Effect** button once or more if you feel it needs beefing up, then do the same with the **Vignette** button. Again, this can be hit several times so the background almost entirely disappears into blackness. A nice, fun effect that's ready in seconds.

Effects Collage

This **Guided** Edit feature, located under **Guided Edit>Fun>Effects Collage**, is very impressive because it can add this collage and coloring effect to your image in seconds, where it might take most of us over an hour to complete manually - which quite probably we would never bother to try. Elements is full of these clever little effects that compress an often tedious manual process into an automated feature that works a treat.


After
2 Sections
3 Sections
4 Sections
Opacity:

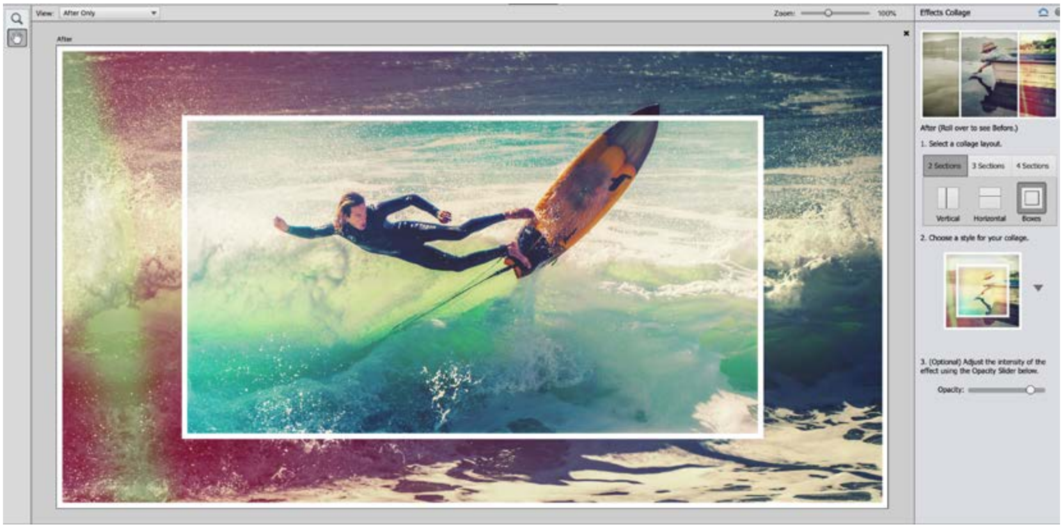
After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Select a collage layout.

2. Choose a style for your collage.

3. (Optional) Adjust the intensity of the effect using the Opacity Slider below.

Open your image, go to **Guided Edit**>**Fun**>**Effects Collage**, choose from a two-, three-, or four-panel effect, and click the **Style** tab to view, and choose, a color effect. It's so easy and if it's not what you expected, undo the last action and try a different combination, such as the picture-in-a-picture effect seen below. Use the **Opacity** slider to reduce the effect intensity if needed.


View: After Only
Zoom: 100%
After
Effects Collage
2 Sections
3 Sections
4 Sections
Vertical
Horizontal
Boxes
Opacity:

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Select a collage layout.

2. Choose a style for your collage.

3. (Optional) Adjust the intensity of the effect using the Opacity Slider below.

Create menu features

Where will you find all of these amazing projects? Under the **Create** menu—but watch out, the list is slightly different between what you'll find in the **Organizer** versus the **Editor**.

The **Create** menu (**Organizer**) contains links to the following:

- Slideshow
- Photo Collage
- Quote Graphic
- Photo prints
- Photo Book
- Greeting card
- Photo Calendar
- Instant Movie
- Video Story
- Video Collage
- DVD with Menu
- CD Jacket
- DVD Jacket
- CD/DVD label

The **Create** menu (**Editor**) contains fewer links:

- Slideshow
- Photo Collage
- Photo prints
- Photo Book
- Greeting card
- Photo Calendar
- CD Jacket
- DVD Jacket
- CD/DVD label

You'll see A LOT of keyboard shortcuts in this book. My advice to all learners is to pick up maybe 10 to 15 of your favourites, and research the rest when the need arises. After all, no one can be expected to remember all the published shortcuts.

Summary

Adobe Photoshop Elements started life as very much a scrapbooking-type, project-based photo editor, and while that *feel* has been somewhat replaced by an increasing number of hardcore image-editing features, it continues to surprise with the types of clever instant and automated features we discussed in this chapter. But for many, these automated processes, while extraordinarily useful, also have finite practicality—you can only go so far with them.

In this chapter, we have seen the power of Adobe's AI in its semi-automated processes, such as **Colorize Photo**, Photomerge Scene Cleaner, **Photomerge Faces**, **Photomerge Panorama**, the slideshow feature, automated greetings card designs, calendars, and, of course, there's a whole lot more - just check the listing in the **Create** menu.

These are all tools designed to help the user, novice and advanced learners alike, pick up their images and get impressive results right from the get go. That's the power of this amazing program.

In the next chapter, we'll start looking at some of the **advanced editing features** that can be found in this application: **Layers**, **Selections**, **Adjustment Layer Masks**, and more. Once you've grasped these features, you will be able to significantly power up your editing skills.

5

Advanced Techniques - Layers and Masking

This is the chapter where you'll move up a notch, from practicing the basics of good, but essentially fairly basic, image editing to learning the art of greater creative control over your work output in Elements' **Expert Edit mode**.

That said, for many grappling with the concept of Layers and Masks, this might seem counterintuitive. Indeed, when I first started to learn Photoshop Elements, it took me months of self-persuasion before I was ready to make an assault on the concept of Layers, such was its perceived complexity.

I was lucky in that, at that point, I had always worked in photography—from commercial audio-visual production to printing in a pro lab—so the concepts of **dodging**, **burning in**, **masking**, and **exposure** were all familiar.

Even so, I still found Layers a little bit tricky, but after a few weeks of messing about, it became one of my all-time favorite features simply because it opened my eyes to a completely new range of creative possibilities.

Hopefully, this chapter will do the same for you...

The chapter begins with an introduction to Layers—what they are, their features and options, and of course, how to use them. Once mastered, layers will significantly change the way you edit your images - for the better! We will then explain how Blend Modes work—this is a feature designed to make images sitting on different layers blend together to produce often startlingly vibrant visual effects (this is one of those features that's hard to describe in words - but you can certainly have quite a bit of fun experimenting with them yourself).

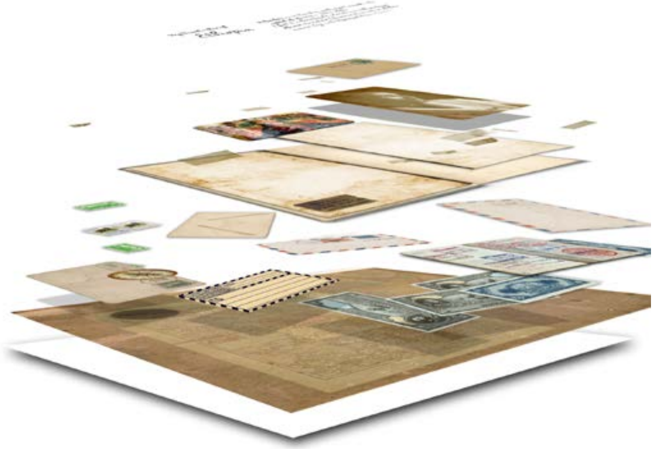
Then it's time to practice non-destructive editing using Adjustment Layers. This section, along with the adjacent pseudo-masking section, introduces you to the technique of layer **masking**—controlling precisely where in the file the edits work and where they won't.

We will also look at the image Transformation process, a very powerful feature used to resize, reposition, or reshape images on layers to make flyers and posters and ultimately to correct perspective and other types of optical distortion. A perfect technique for all those photographers with a passion for architectural photography.

Plus, you'll find a bunch of handy information on getting the most from Elements' range of eraser brushes - used for removing excess pixels, as well as entire backgrounds when necessary, and the fabulous, but often underrated, Gradient tool.

What you'll learn from this chapter:

- Introduction to Layers
- Other features on the Layers panel
- Layer Opacity
- Adjustment Layers
- Adjustment Layer masking
- Layer masking
- Transformations: picture in a picture
- Smart Objects
- Correcting perspective
- Blend modes

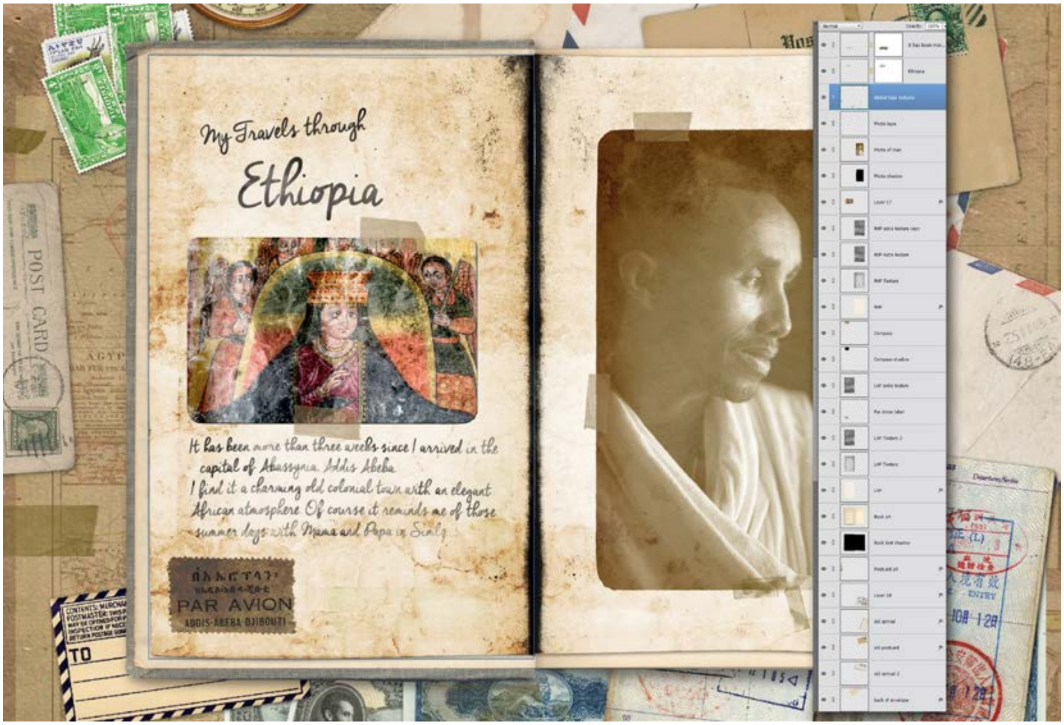


Transform your image-making skills by learning all about the amazing power of Layers.

Introduction to Layers

Layers are a powerful feature found in Elements that I think will dramatically change the way you edit your pictures. More importantly, it will also significantly expand your *creative potential.*

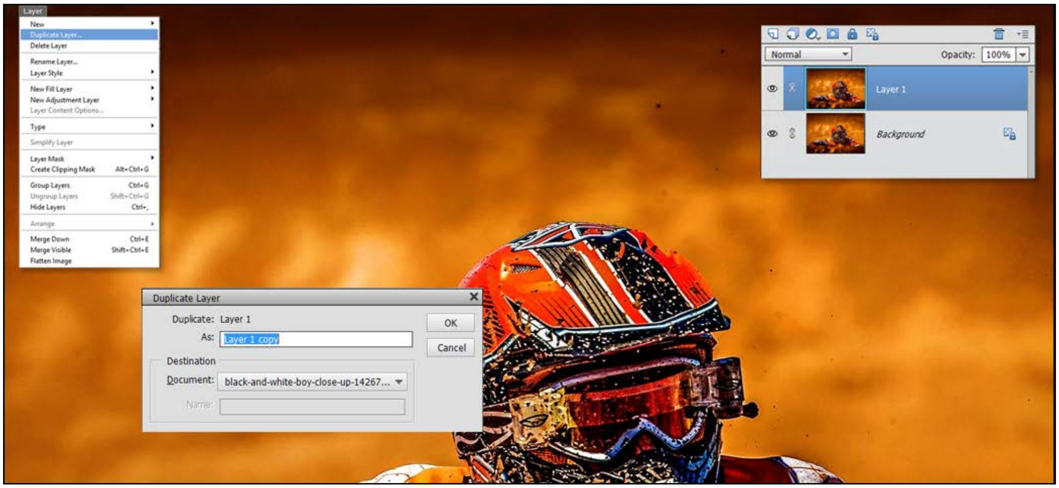
Layers are used when we want to include more than one element in a file, such as images, text, or graphics. They're also important when we want to edit individual parts of an image without affecting the rest of the picture. Aside from retaining complete editability of all components (providing that they are on separate layers), a layered file must be saved in a special file format - typically a Photoshop or a TIFF file. Besides retaining the layers, these formats suffer no compression artifacts, are fairly universal in their use, plus they have the unique ability to contain multiple versions of the same image within the same file.



It has been more than three weeks since I arrived in the capital of Abassynia Addis Abeba
I find it a charming old colonial town with an elegant African atmosphere Of course it reminds me of those summer days with Mama and Papa in Sicily

The traveller's journal: This is a project I undertook a few years ago. It's made up of more than **50 individual elements** located on **40 or more layers**. It's a very busy image made from a few of my own photos; everything else has been sourced from the internet. Because all the different elements are on their own layers, I can move everything separately - the passports, stamps, tape, and postcards can all be shifted if the composition needs to be adjusted. And thanks to the power of layers, I can hide bits of the elements as if they were really under another object - such as the stamps and passport under the diary.

Layers occupy their own panel and are displayed like a stacked deck of cards. Each layer, be it text, graphics, or an image, can be shuffled up or down the layer panel. Those that reside on the top of the stack overshadow those beneath unless those at the top are smaller, or have their opacity reduced so data shows through. More on this later.


Layer
New
Duplicate Layer...
Delete Layer
Rename Layer...
Layer Style
New Fill Layer
New Adjustment Layer
Layer Content Options...
Type
Simplify Layer
Layer Mask
Create Clipping Mask Alt+Ctrl+G
Group Layers Ctrl+G
Ungroup Layers Shift+Ctrl+G
Hide Layers Ctrl+,
Arrange
Merge Down Ctrl+E
Merge Visible Shift+Ctrl+E
Flatten Image
OK
Cancel
Layer 1
Background

Duplicate Layer

Duplicate: Layer 1

As: Layer 1 copy

Destination

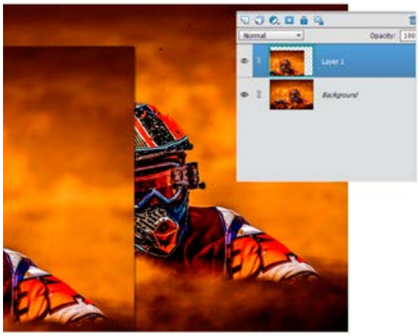
Document: black-and-white-boy-close-up-14267...

Name:

Normal

Opacity: 100%

Layers #1: Hover your cursor over the **Layer** menu at the top of the screen, choose **Duplicate Layer**, and then click **OK** in the **Duplicate Layer** panel that opens. Now's a good time to get into the habit of giving any new layer a specific name - it'll help you identify layers if you come back to that file at a later time. You now have two identical layers in the **Layer** panel. One is highlighted in blue—this means that it is the **active layer**, so anything done to this file (changes to the color or contrast, shape, retouching) will only appear on this layer, not the ones beneath it. When duplicating a layer, nothing changes in the main screen in front of you because you have simply covered the original picture with a copy of that original, and since it's identical, you won't see any change. The duplicated layer will always sit above the original, and this is always called the **Background Layer**. The **Background Layer** has a small **padlock icon** to the right of its name. This means that that layer is partially locked and cannot be moved, or made smaller, unless the padlock is removed (clicking the padlock icon once removes it. It automatically becomes **Layer 0**—then, it can be moved).

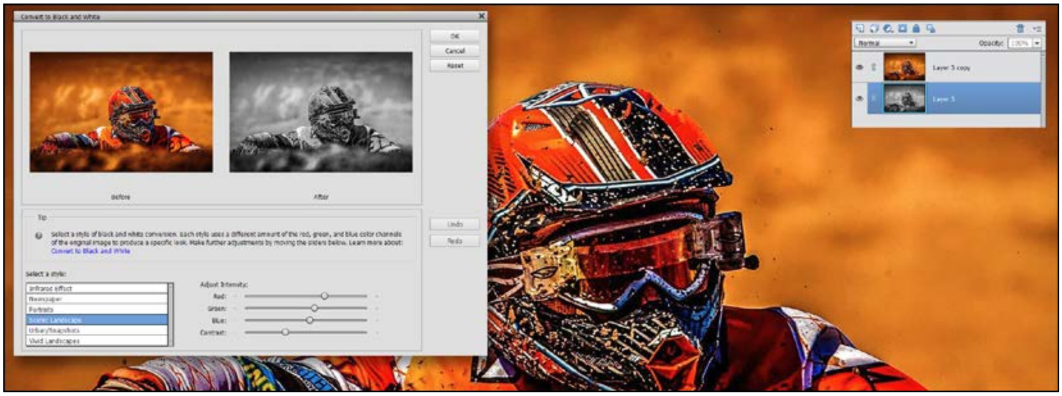

Normal
Opacity: 100
Layer 1
Background

Layers #2: If you duplicate a layer, then move it using the **Move Tool**, it will be the top layer that moves because the duplicated layer always sits on top, obscuring the original layer underneath.

I moved this layer slightly down and to the left so you can clearly see there are two identical pictures in the file, both in the main screen, and in the tiny layer thumbnail. The chequerboard pattern around the moved image (in the **Layer** panel) indicates **transparency** - which is why we can see whatever is underneath that part of the file. **Transparency** is a fundamental part of the layer process and is something that will crop up repeatedly.

To get the best understanding of the power that Layers brings to the photographer and graphic artist, let's start by looking at the layer components and how they can be employed to jump start your creativity.

A single photo, irrespective of its dimensions, resolution, or color mode, occupies a **single layer**. It's usually made up of pixels. However, if it's text or some kind of graphic, it will be made up of things called vectors (we'll look at vectors in *Chapter 6*, *Advanced Techniques: Retouching, Selections, and Text*, and in *Chapter 8*, *Advanced Drawing and Painting Techniques*).


Convert to Black and White
OK
Cancel
Reset
Before
After
Tip
Undo
Redo
Select a style:
Infrared Effect
Newspaper
Portraits
Scenic Landscape
Urban/Snapshots
Vivid Landscapes
Adjust Intensity:
Red:
Green:
Blue:
Contrast:
Normal
Opacity:
100%
Layer 3 copy
Layer 3

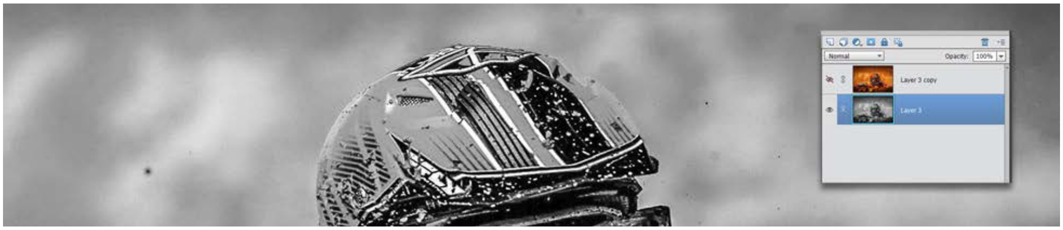
Select a style of black and white conversion. Each style uses a different amount of the red, green, and blue color channels of the original image to produce a specific look. Make further adjustments by moving the sliders below. Learn more about: Convert to Black and White

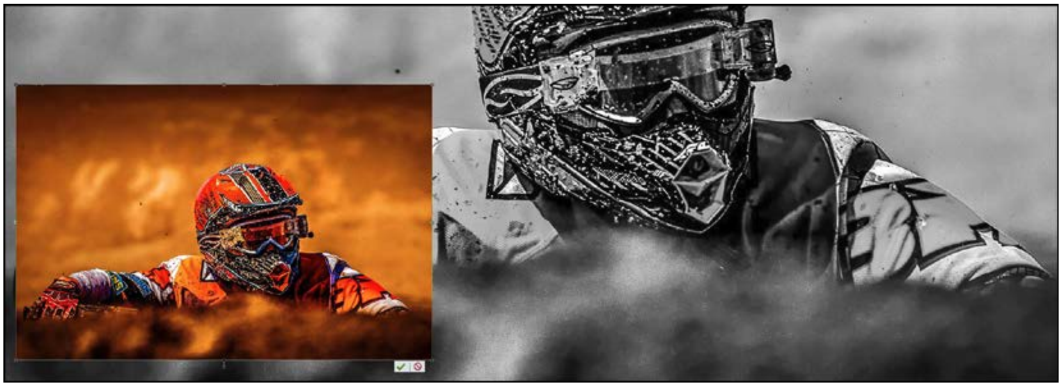
Layers #3: Here's another way to understand how layers actually work: if I were to select the **Convert to Black and White** feature from the **Enhance** drop-down menu, then click **OK** (no need to spend any time choosing a black-and-white style), you'll see that the active layer turns black and white (as well as the tiny thumbnail in the **Layer** panel).

However, although the **Convert to Black and White** feature shows it turning black and white, the main image remains in full color. Why is this happening? Because the active layer is the one underneath the color layer. Since the color layer is 100% opaque, it effectively stops us from seeing what's going on in the layer stack.

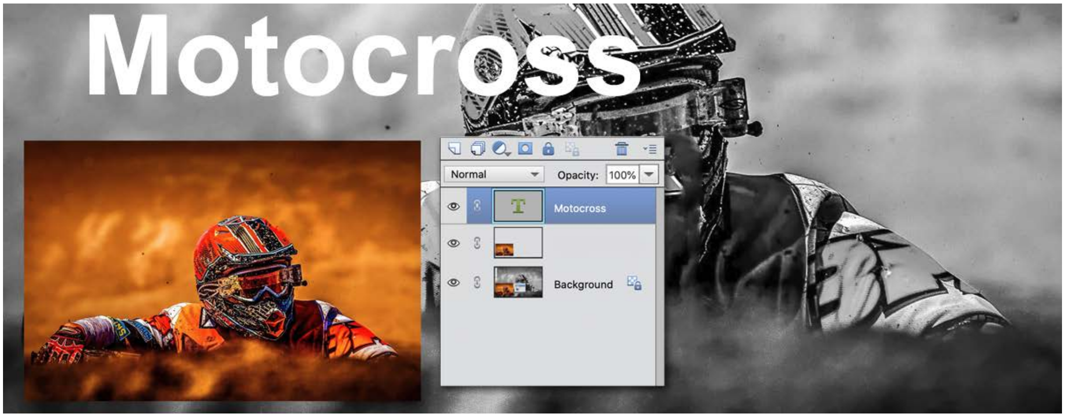
But we can always see what's happening if we look at the layer thumbnails. To view the B/W version, I need to make that top layer invisible by clicking the tiny eye icon to the left of the thumbnail in the active layer. Turning the visibility of that layer off means that we can now see the content of the layer directly below it, which is the newly converted B/W version.

The newly converted black-and-white version is on the bottom of the layer stack, while the color version is on the top. Knowing which layer you are actually working on can be a bit confusing, but as long as you keep an eye on that Layer panel, you should be fine.

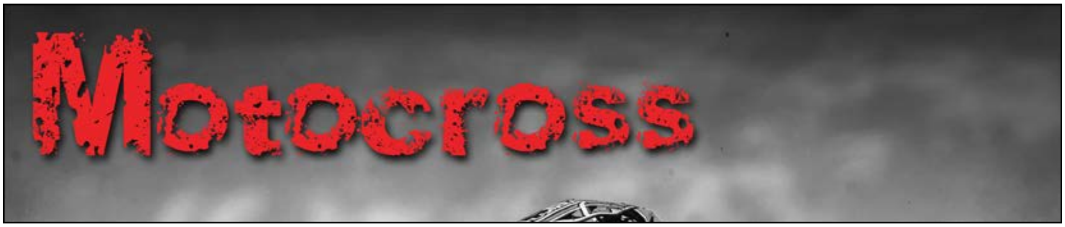

Normal
Opacity:
100%
Layer 3 copy
Layer 3



Layers #4: To make the color layer smaller, I can use the **Transform tool** (*Ctrl/Cmd + T*) and push one of the square photo corners inward to shrink it down. As you make that upper layer smaller, it reveals the original color version behind it. When transforming any object on a Layer, Elements needs you to confirm or cancel the action by either clicking the green checkmark (OK), or the red symbol (cancel) before you can proceed with more editing (more on the Transform Tool later in this chapter).

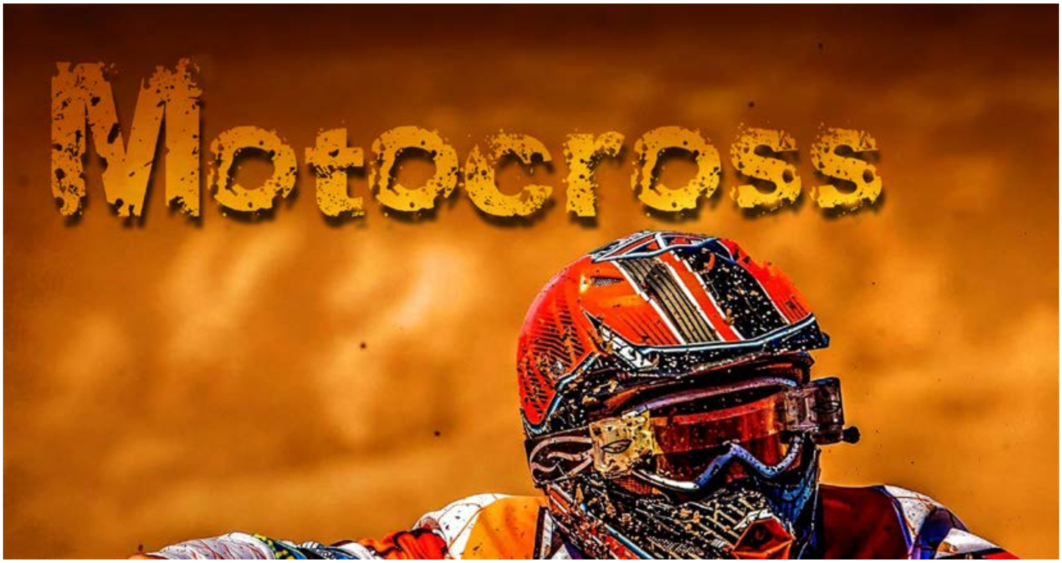


Layers #5: If text is added to a file, it creates its own **text layer**. This is made up of vectors, not pixels. The main difference between a vector and a pixel layer is that the former is a mathematical formula that can be enlarged to any dimension with no loss of quality (because it's just an algorithm), while the latter, the pixel-based layer, has a very finite range of enlargeability that it can move through before it loses quality. When you shrink or enlarge an image on a layer, Elements uses clever interpolation or **resampling** algorithms to calculate how many pixels are needed to make the image larger or how to remove them to make it smaller. It's an excellent process, but it also involves a lot of **dithering**, a process that softens the edges of pixels (to avoid obvious pixilation), which makes the resulting resized image softer.



Layers #6: After spending some time practicing with layers, you'll find that adding text is a relatively easy operation, and can then embark on a range of text-based creative projects, from posters to flyers and even business cards. I changed the regular-looking font, **Myriad Pro**, to something a little rougher to match the energy of the sport. I used a font called **SoulMission** in red, then added a drop shadow (from the **Styles** panel). There's more on using the **Type** Tool in *Chapter 6*, *Advanced Techniques: Retouching, Selections, and Text*.

Other vector layers that you'll find in Elements include **custom shapes**, such as text boxes, copyright stamps, and other graphic symbols, which can be combined into any document. Like all the pixel-based photo layers, text can also be edited independently of the rest of the image, which makes it a great feature if you're as bad a typist as I am.

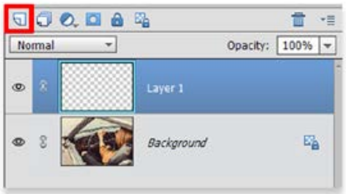


Layers #7: Drop shadows do a great job of lifting text off the surface of the image. They add depth as well as legibility, which is particularly important when adding text on top of an image like this. The busier the image is, the harder it might be to read.

Font choice is also vital to the success of any multimedia document that might incorporate text. Understanding how font choice, font style (bold, italics, and so on), and point sizes work can make or break a good project (see the next section on custom fonts). As we'll see in the section on graphics coming up in *Chapter 7*, *Advanced Drawing and Painting Techniques*, you can also add text boxes behind the text itself to make the typeface 100% legible. You can also reduce that text box's opacity so that some of the image shines through so that it's not a solid block of color on the image.

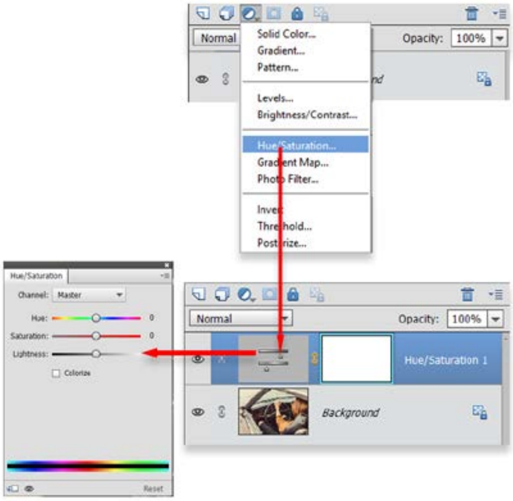
Other features on the Layer panel

The **Layer** panel (on the right-hand side of the main window in the **Expert Edit** modes) features a number of useful shortcuts in the form of **buttons** along the top of the panel. From left to right, these include the following:


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 1
Background

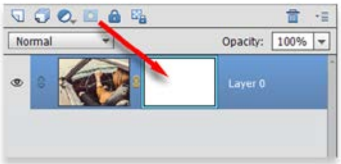
Create a New Layer (left): Here, highlighted in **red** - click this to add a new layer to a document. It has nothing on it, so it appears clear, hence the chequerboard background.

Create a New Group: When you are working with a lot of layers, you might want to bunch similar layers together into a (**Group**) folder to help compact the **Layer** panel. Grouped layers can be moved, transformed, and masked as a single entity.

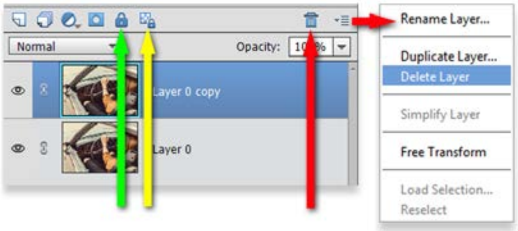

Normal
Opacity: 100%
Solid Color...
Gradient...
Pattern...
Levels...
Brightness/Contrast...
Hue/Saturation...
Gradient Map...
Photo Filter...
Invert
Threshold...
Posterize...
Hue/Saturation
Channel: Master
Hue: 0
Saturation: 0
Lightness: 0
Colorize
Reset
Hue/Saturation 1
Background

Create a New Fill or Adjustment Layer (left): Here's where you can add a range of **non-destructive edits** to a specific layer. They are termed "non-destructive" as they don't affect the pixels in the target layer. Adjustment Layers come with an attached mask (the white thumbnail), which can be used to add the effect to parts of the target layer only. Very handy - see Adjustment Layers later in this chapter.

In this example, a **Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer** is in place.


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 0

Add a Layer Mask (left): Layer masking is described later on in this chapter. Masks add tremendous editing control over different parts of any layer by using a black or white brush to hide/reveal different parts of the image (arrowed).


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 0 copy
Layer 0
Rename Layer...
Duplicate Layer...
Delete Layer
Simplify Layer
Free Transform
Load Selection...
Reselect

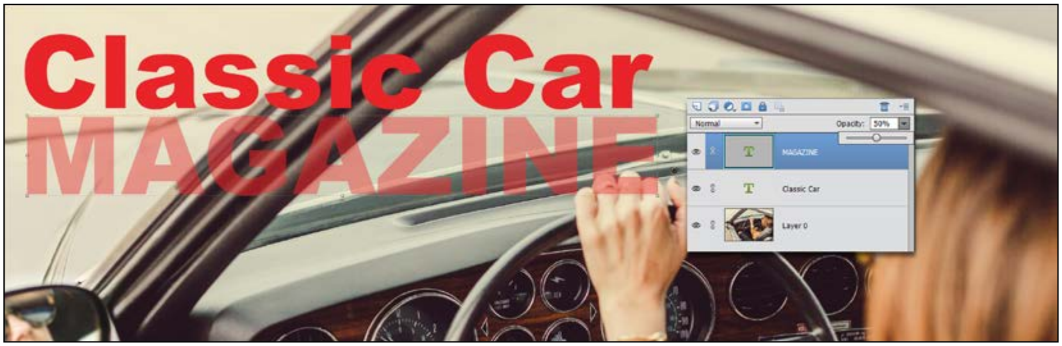
Lock All Pixels (green arrow): Use this feature if you want to prevent further changes to the layers.

Lock Transparency (yellow arrow): This prevents you from accidentally losing the transparent sections of the document (for example, by painting over them).

Delete Layer (red arrow) : Take out the trash! I think this feature is self-explanatory. You can also delete a layer by right-clicking the layer itself, and choosing **Delete Layer** from the pop-out menu.

Layer opacity

As the name might suggest, you can use the **Opacity** feature to change the density, or **opacity**, of an individual layer. One way to blend one layer into another is to change the top layer to a lower opacity. Another reason to use a lowered opacity value is to see what's underneath that layer if, say, you needed to reposition that top layer precisely on top of an object in the layer underneath it. Once repositioned, you can reset that layer's opacity back to 100% and carry on with the edit.

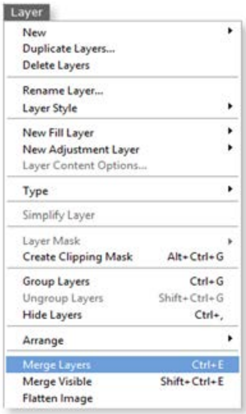

Classic Car
MAGAZINE
Normal
Opacity: 50%
MAGAZINE
Classic Car
Layer 0

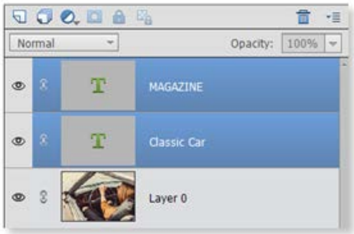
In this example, I have reduced the **MAGAZINE** text layer to 50% - generally, if you are going to create this kind of special effect, it pays to have the elements involved in separate layers; otherwise—in this example—**Classic Car** would also fade, thus negating the intended effect.

Merging layers

Apart from the physical buttons and menus on the **Layer** panel, if you right-click the tiny icon to the right of the trash can, a pop-out menu offers the same features in the Layers menu at the top of the main screen, including the ability to integrate one (active) layer with the one underneath it, which is a process called **Merge Down**. (Note: Once saved as a Photoshop file, and closed, you'll not be able to access those layers again.)

Merge Visible is slightly different as it flattens all the visible layers into one layer. The more useful **Flatten Image** command merges all the layers into one layer. If you try to save a multi-layered Photoshop format file (`.psd`) as a JPEG file, watch the **Layers** panel as Elements automatically flattens the layers, saves it as a JPEG file, then unflattens everything as it returns to its former multi-layered `.psd` format state, leaving you with the original `.psd` file, plus a flattened `.jpg` file.

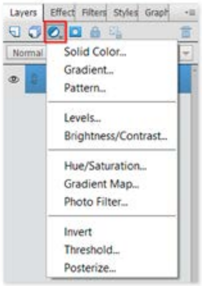

Layer
New
Duplicate Layers...
Delete Layers
Rename Layer...
Layer Style
New Fill Layer
New Adjustment Layer
Layer Content Options...
Type
Simplify Layer
Layer Mask
Create Clipping Mask Alt+Ctrl+G
Group Layers Ctrl+G
Ungroup Layers Shift+Ctrl+G
Hide Layers Ctrl+,
Arrange
Merge Layers Ctrl+E
Merge Visible Shift+Ctrl+E
Flatten Image


Normal
Opacity: 100%
MAGAZINE
Classic Car
Layer 0

Adjustment Layers

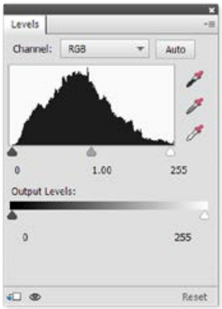
An Adjustment Layer works like a ghost layer. It is used to make nondestructive tonal changes to regular images. The clue here is in the term "nondestructive." Editing files, especially JPEG files, can be destructive, especially if it's done over-enthusiastically, repeatedly, or not very well. In such cases, the image (eventually) loses quality, unless it's a RAW file, which is always a copy of the original. I may add that, although this nondestructiveness claim certainly sounds impressive, it's actually hard to quantify with real-life examples, when compared with destructive forms of editing.

Even so, for many photographers, one of the huge advantages of using an Adjustment Layer is that it can also be used as a mask. A mask is a Photoshop Elements feature that can be used to limit the effect of any change, tonal or otherwise, to selected parts of the picture. They are an incredible way to lighten, darken, saturate, or desaturate specific bits of an image, while leaving the rest of the image untouched. What's more, a mask is a relatively simple feature to create.

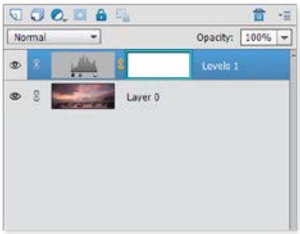

Layers
Effect
Filters
Styles
Graph
Normal
Solid Color...
Gradient...
Pattern...
Levels...
Brightness/Contrast...
Hue/Saturation...
Gradient Map...
Photo Filter...
Invert
Threshold...
Posterize...

Step one: An **Adjustment Layer** can be added to any picture - either via the icon on the top of the **Layers** menu (here in red), or via the **Layers** menu, along the top of the main screen.

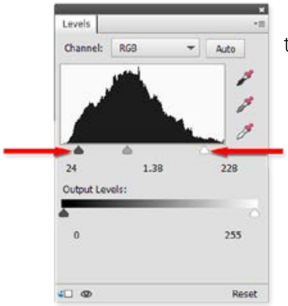
From the menu you can choose a range of different Adjustment Layer effects: **Solid Color**, **Gradient**, **Pattern**, **Levels**, **Brightness/Contrast**, **Hue/Saturation**, **Gradient Map**, **Photo Filter**, **Invert**, **Threshold**, and **Posterize**.


Levels
Channel: RGB
Auto
0
1.00
255
Output Levels:
0
255
Reset

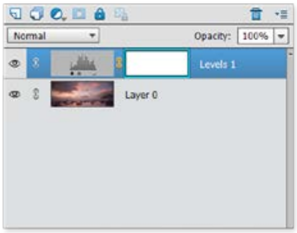
Step two: In this example, I chose the **Levels Adjustment Layer** - you can see the familiar **Levels** histogram in the center of the screen. The idea is to make a Levels adjustment, paying attention to only the part of the scene that needs added brightness and or contrast - ignore the rest, even if it begins to look too light or dark.


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Levels 1
Layer 0

The Adjustment Layer's mask is located to the right of the Levels adjustment icon (the white thumbnail).


Levels
Channel: RGB
Auto
24
1.38
228
Output Levels:
0
255
Reset

Step three: By pushing the two small sliders on either side of the tone histogram, I increased the contrast in the scene.


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Levels 1
Layer 0

Once done, you can leave the Adjustment Layer as is (it then has to be saved as a TIFF or a PSD file) or you can move on to use the white mask to limit the tone changes to certain parts of the image only, not all of it.

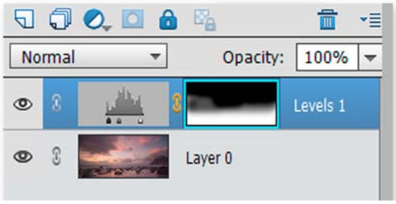
Adjustment Layer Masking

Adjustment Layers are also all about masking - let's take a look at how this works:

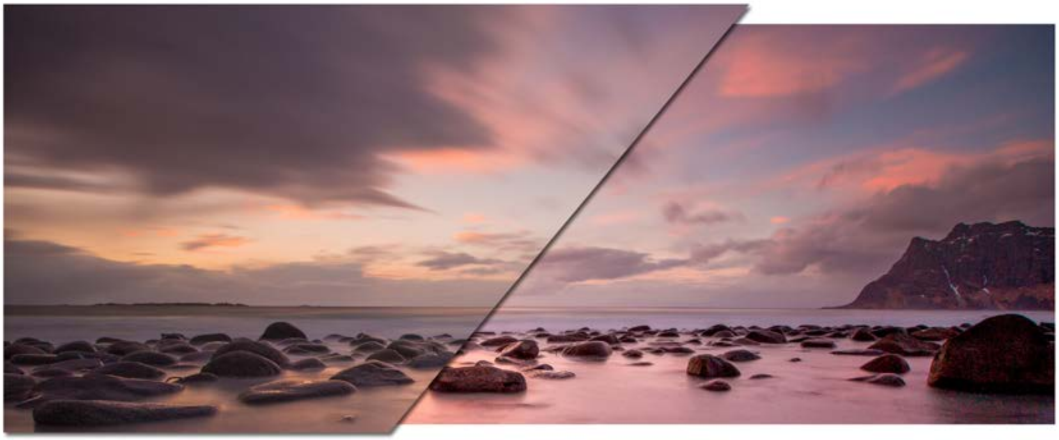
Step one: Click the layer mask, the white rectangle thumbnail, once to select it. A light blue (highlight) line will appear around that white mask rectangle - it's now the active part of the Adjustment Layer. Note: If you try to 'paint' into the adjustment part of the layer, Elements will prompt: **This layer must be flattened before proceeding. Flatten the layer?** Choose **Cancel**, then click the white thumbnail to activate the mask.

Step two: Choose the **Brush** tool from the **Tool Bar** (press *B* or click the brush icon in the **Draw** section of the **Tool Bar**). Make sure that the brush tip that you've chosen is suitable for the process (that is, hard or soft brush, large or small).

To ensure that you get black paint (and not some other color), press *D* (for the default color setting), which is black in the background and white in the foreground. (Press the *X* key to swap black with white. Press *X* again to swap it back to black.)



Step three (left): With that white mask thumbnail highlighted, paint directly into the image in the main screen, and note that the brightness/contrast effect created by the Levels adjustment is removed as you paint black into the white mask. Black makes the mask opaque. Check the thumbnail and you'll see that your black brush marks appear in the thumbnail. The more you paint, the less the Levels adjustment appears in the main image. If you make a mistake and paint black into the mask where you shouldn't have, press the *X* key (to swap black with white) and paint over the black paint to make that bit of the mask see-through again. You can go backward and forward, fine-tuning the position and accuracy of the tonal change, as many times as you like. It is infinitely editable.



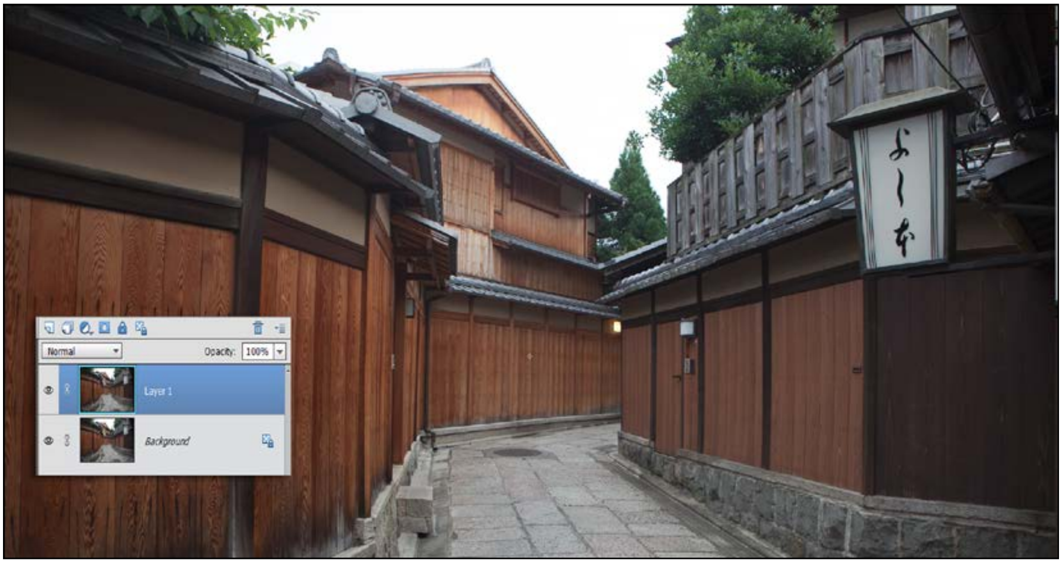
Here's a comparison between the original image, above left, and the improved image, with local contrast added, mostly across the shoreline, lower right.

Layer masking

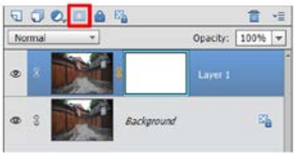
Most photographers will agree when I say that you can only take your editing so far using Elements' **global tone-changing tools**. In this book, we have seen how effective the global tools are, but sooner rather than later, you'll realize that you need to develop skills to edit small parts of your picture, rather than the entire file.

Layer masking is one of the keystone features of all photo editing applications for the simple reason that it allows you to make significant changes to very specific parts of any image. Once set up, it's easy to do and is infinitely editable. This is achieved by first making a global edit (using a tool such as Levels), then, with the mask active, painting black makes the layer transparent, thus revealing the original state of the image. Painting white makes the mask opaque, thus covering the original image with the newly edited version.

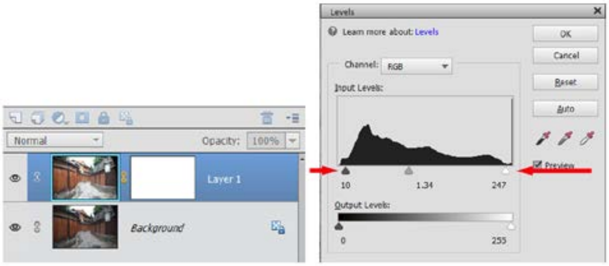
The magic of this technique becomes apparent if you make a mistake and paint over something in the mask so that part of the image returns to the original - when you really wanted it to remain enhanced. If this happens, tap the *X* key to flip the background to the foreground color (white to black). Magically, the mistake is erased with the application of white paint on black. This backward/forward masking is infinite - which is what makes it such a great editing technique.



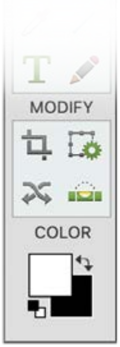
Step one: Setting up a **Layer Mask** is easy. Begin by opening an image. This is part of the old town in Kyoto featuring centuries-old wooden houses. It was a dull day so the resulting image was the same. It needs a little selective help. Duplicate the layer; this stage is not vital to the editing process, but out of habit, I've always kept the original layer intact and operated on, or edited, a duplicate so that I can easily return to the original in the same file by switching the editing layer's visibility to **off** (by clicking the eye icon).

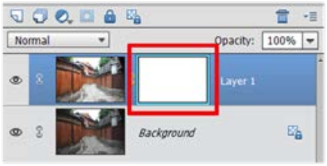


Step two: Ensure that the Layer panel is fully visible and check that the top layer – the duplicated layer – is the active layer (highlighted in blue). Above that layer sits a row of buttons that are specific to layer editing. The feature that we are interested in here is the **Add a Layer Mask** button. Click this and note that a white thumbnail appears at the right-hand side of that layer's photo thumbnail. You have just created your first Layer Mask on its own. A white Layer Mask is transparent, so at this stage, it has no effect on the image.



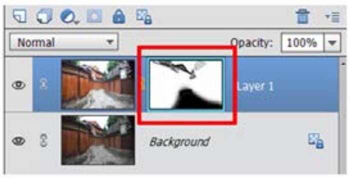
Step three: Make a tone edit to the layer. As an example, let's brighten the image using Levels (Ctrl/Cmd + L). Before you do this, it's important to make sure that the photo thumbnail, and NOT the mask thumbnail, is highlighted. Double-clicking the thumbnail selects it, and you'll see that the thumbnail becomes highlighted in light blue. Adjust the image contrast and/or brightness. Everything looks 100% normal; the white mask is still fully transparent, so all we see onscreen is the adjusted version. Some parts look good, while others might be too bright.





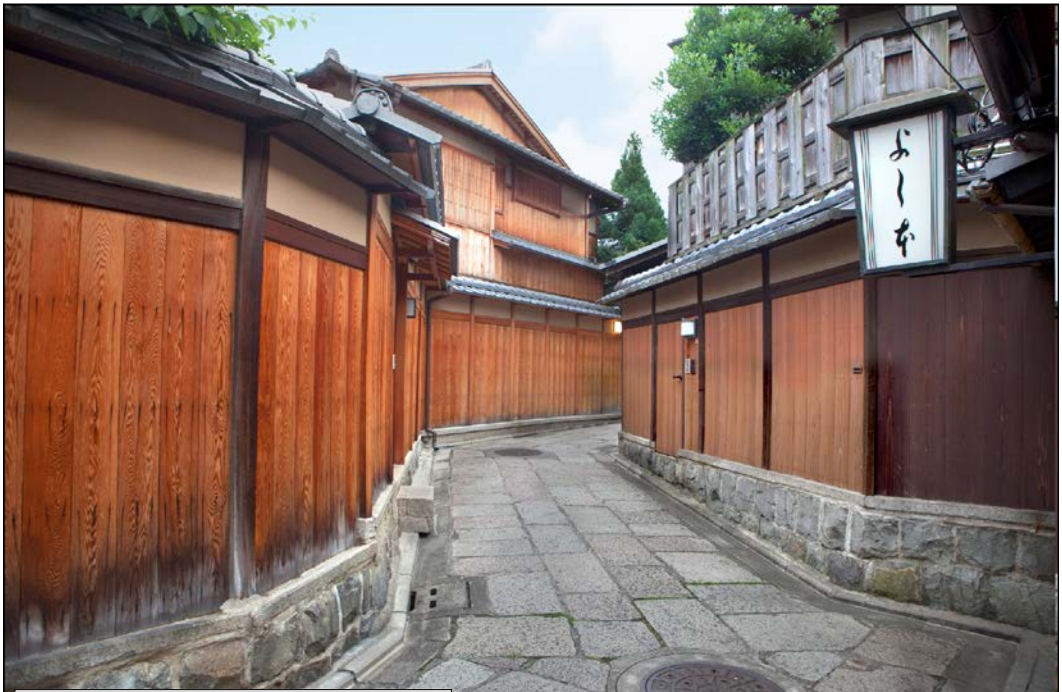
Step four: Now comes the magic. Clicking the white layer thumbnail will make it active (highlighted around the edges **in light blue**). Select the **Brush Tool** (making doubly sure that it's the real paintbrush and not the **Impressionist Brush** or the **Color Replacement Brush**), and choose black from the **Color Picker** (the two small color squares under **Modify** at the bottom of the Tool Bar). A quick way to do this is to press the **D** key, which sets a default of white in the foreground and black as the background color. Then press the **X** key - this automatically flips the foreground to the background color (to give you black paint).

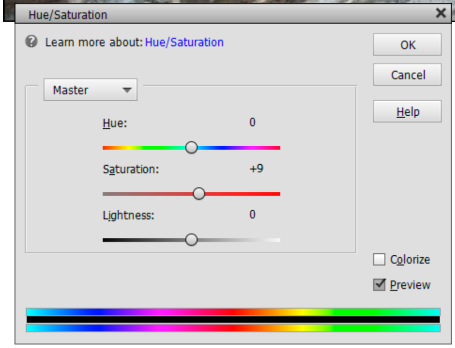
Step five: Paint over the object in the image that you want brought back to the original brightness, and as you paint onto the image (but it's actually onto the mask) with a brush loaded with black paint, note that the original brightness and contrast returns. Release the mouse and note that the black paint mysteriously appears, not in the main image, but in the mask thumbnail.



Step six: Each time you stop painting and release the mouse, the state of masking is updated in the mask. So if you keep an eye on this feature while you create your mask, it will keep updating and you can get an idea of the true coverage of the mask - and indeed if you have missed sections (easy to do).

Don't forget that you can further refine this technique by changing the size, shape, opacity, and softness of the brush that you're using. This gives the designer or photographer infinite levels of control in terms of adding subtle changes to any image.




Hue/Saturation

Learn more about: Hue/Saturation

Master

Hue: 0

Saturation: +9

Lightness: 0

☐ Colorize

☑ Preview

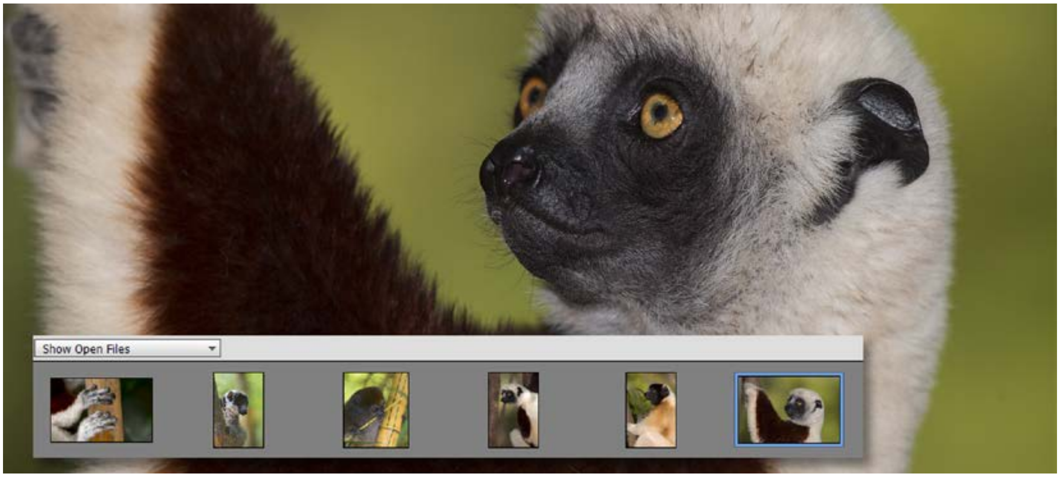
Final thought: You are not restricted to just using **Levels** on the masked layer; any tone-changing tool that can be used to alter the properties in the image can be employed to change the tones in the masked areas. I increased the color intensity to the wooden walls to emphasize the character of these old Japanese buildings using **Hue/Saturation**. Although this masking demonstration is quite simple in its scope, I hope that by illustrating the process simply, you'll begin to appreciate just how powerful this technique can be.

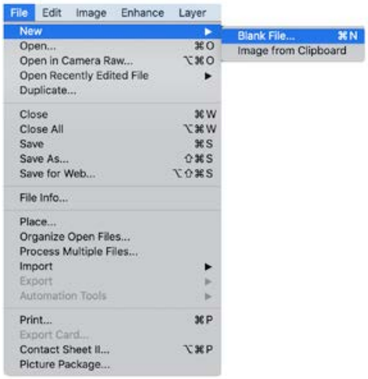
Layer Mask Tips

- Always make sure that the mask is active (highlighted in blue); otherwise, any painting will land in the image, not the mask, and cause irreparable damage to the pixels.
- Remember to use the *D* key to reset the Color Picker to a white foreground over a black background.
- Use the *X* key to change between foreground and background colors.
- Don't forget that the image thumbnail must be highlighted in order to add tone effects.
- The layer mask thumbnail must be highlighted in order for the painting technique to work.

Transformations: Pictures in a Picture

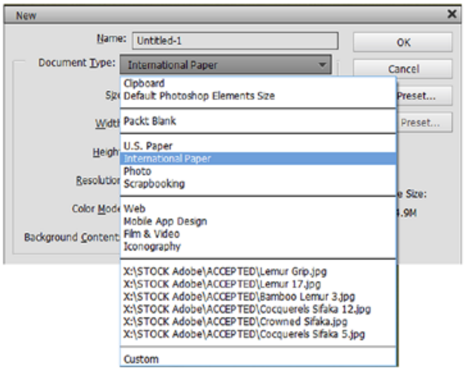
Another great way to understand how layers work in Photoshop Elements is through creating a **multi-image poster**. By adding multiple photos to single file, you can then resize those pictures and move them so that they sit side by side rather than sitting on top of each other.


Show Open Files


File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
New ▶
Blank File... ⌘N
Image from Clipboard
Open... ⌘O
Open in Camera Raw... ⌥⌘O
Open Recently Edited File ▶
Duplicate...
Close ⌘W
Close All ⌥⌘W
Save ⌘S
Save As... ⇧⌘S
Save for Web... ⌥⇧⌘S
File Info...
Place...
Organize Open Files...
Process Multiple Files...
Import ▶
Export ▶
Automation Tools ▶
Print... ⌘P
Export Card...
Contact Sheet II... ⌥⌘P
Picture Package...

Step one: First off, open the pictures you want to incorporate into the project. Note that their thumbnails appear in the Photo Bin at the bottom of the screen.

Step two, left: Then, create a new document to the dimensions of your poster by going to **File** | **New** | **Blank File**. This is where it's a good idea to research your printing options. Check on the lab's printing dimensions (and **cost**).

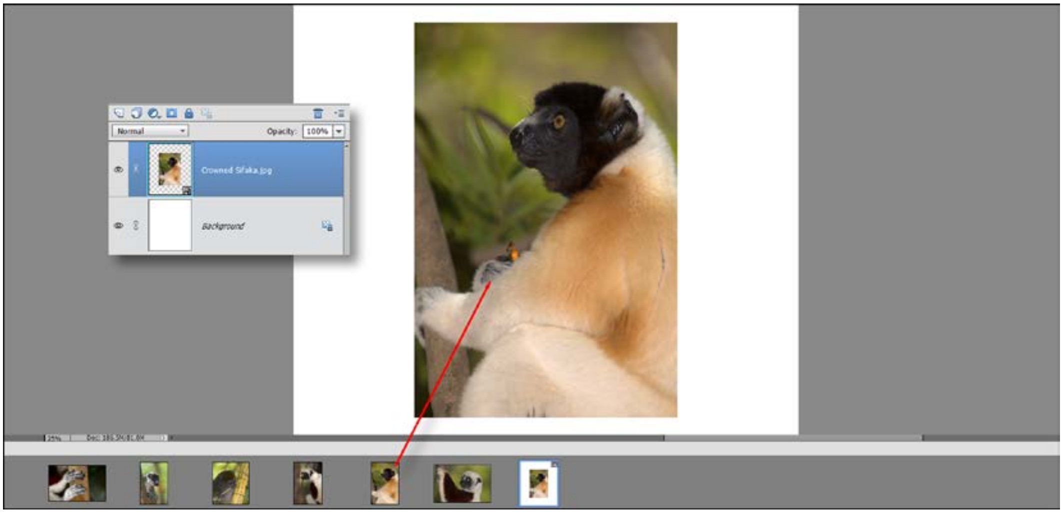


Name: Untitled-1

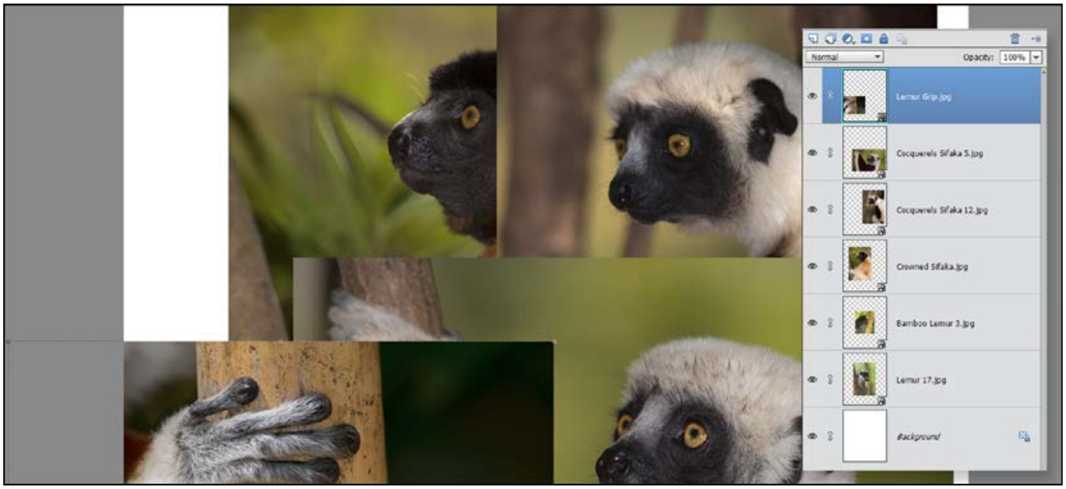
Document Type: International Paper

New
OK
Cancel
Preset...
Preset...
Size
Width
Height
Resolution
Color Mode
Background Contents
Size:
.9M
Clipboard
Default Photoshop Elements Size
Packt Blank
U.S. Paper
International Paper
Photo
Scrapbooking
Web
Mobile App Design
Film & Video
Iconography
X:\STOCK Adobe\ACCEPTED\Lemur Grip.jpg
X:\STOCK Adobe\ACCEPTED\Lemur 17.jpg
X:\STOCK Adobe\ACCEPTED\Bamboo Lemur 3.jpg
X:\STOCK Adobe\ACCEPTED\Cocquerels Sifaka 12.jpg
X:\STOCK Adobe\ACCEPTED\Crowned Sifaka.jpg
X:\STOCK Adobe\ACCEPTED\Cocquerels Sifaka 5.jpg
Custom

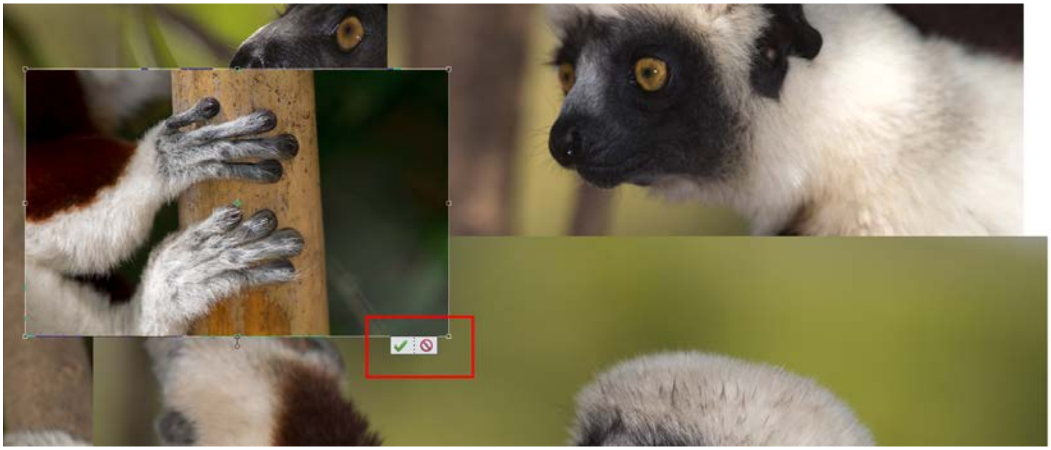
Step three: The **New** panel that subsequently appears onscreen allows you to type in the vertical and horizontal dimensions of your new document, along with its base resolution. You can also quickly choose one of the preset document dimensions from the **Document Type** drop-down menu (such as A4, A3, US letter, HD Video, and so on). If the poster is to be printed, I suggest setting a resolution of 200 or 300 dpi. Click **OK**. The new, white Background Layer will appear onscreen.


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Crowned Sifaka.jpg
Background

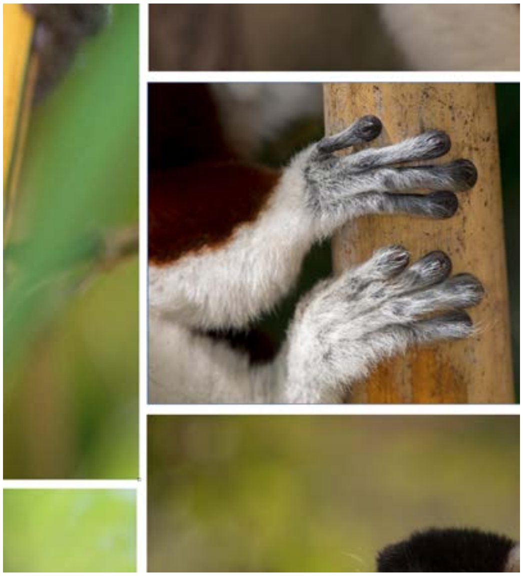
Step four: With the white new document displayed on the main screen, push one of the image thumbnails from the **Photo Bin** into the main image. You'll see it appear on top of the white document. Check the Layer panel when you do this to confirm that there is indeed a new layer containing your photograph on top of the white background later. Save the document in either the Photoshop (`.psd`) or TIFF (`.tif`) file format. Remember, JPEGs cannot contain any extras, such as selections, layers, or masks.


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Lemur Grip.jpg
Cocquerels Sifaka 5.jpg
Cocquerels Sifaka 12.jpg
Crowned Sifaka.jpg
Bamboo Lemur 3.jpg
Lemur 17.jpg
Background

Step five: Follow the same process with the other images that you want to include in the poster, checking every time to confirm that the new image being pushed into your master document appears in the **Layer** panel. Inevitably, each image being copied into the master document will cover up the previous image (as you can see in the screenshot here), but don't worry about this because we are about to reposition everything for a better design. Save your work and move on to the next stage.

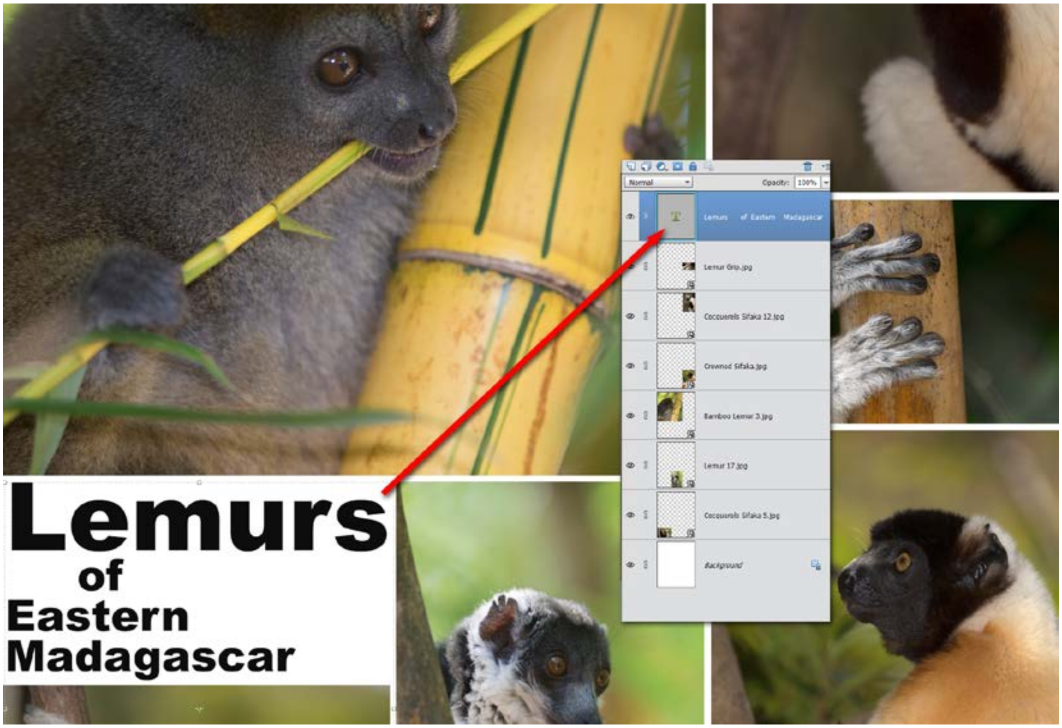


Step six: The easiest technique for changing the proportions of any item, pixel-based or vector, on an individual layer is called a **transformation**. To begin this process, choose **Image**>**Transform**>**Free Transform** (use the *Ctrl/Cmd* + *T* keyboard shortcut, or simply just click and push the corner of the selected image with the Move tool). Once this is selected, you'll notice a grid appear across that single image with what Adobe refers to as **corner handles**. If you click, hold, and drag a handle inwards you'll reduce the size of that image proportionally. Dragging a midpoint handle (there's one on each side, inset, above) will shrink the size of the image, while also distorting it. Avoid this. Once the image has been resized so that it is smaller onscreen, you'll see a green checkmark appear at the bottom right-hand side of that image. Click this if you're happy with the resizing operation, or click the red icon if you want to cancel and retry the transformation process.



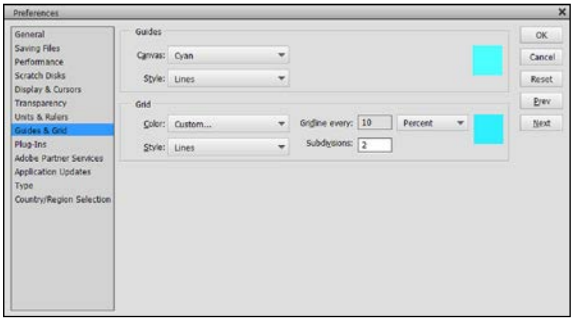
Step seven: Repeat this transformation process for all the other images in the Photo Bin, resizing them so that they fit together in the layout of your choosing. Whenever an image is resized (larger or smaller), Elements waits for you to OK that action before allowing you to move on. This is a good feature, but if you are not paying attention, getting stuck without knowing why can be a bit frustrating. Either confirm by clicking the green **OK** symbol (you can also press *Enter* on the keyboard), cancel the operation by clicking the red no entry symbol, or press the Escape key (*Esc*) to cancel most operations in this application.

Remember, the huge advantage of working with layers means that, once everything in the document sits on an individual layer, it remains individually editable, which is a huge bonus, especially if you are working with a client that frequently changes their mind.


Lemurs
of
Eastern
Madagascar
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Lemurs of Eastern Madagascar
Lemur Gro.jpg
Cocquerels Sifaka 12.jpg
Crowned Sifaka.jpg
Bamboo Lemur 3.jpg
Lemur 17.jpg
Cocquerels Sifaka 5.jpg
Background

Step eight: To add text, choose the **Horizontal Type** tool from the **Tool Bar** (or press the *T* key), click once in the document to automatically create a new text layer (check the **layer** panel to confirm); note the type insertion point blinking just where you clicked in the image. Begin typing and the program will probably pick up the font and point size that was selected the last time the Type tool was used. By clicking once in the document to start the Type tool, it will allow you to type a sentence.

A really easy way to add text to any image is to use one of the text presets found in the **Graphics** panel. For more information on getting the most out of the **Type** tool, check out the *Adding text to images* section later in this chapter.


Preferences
General
Saving Files
Performance
Scratch Disks
Display & Cursors
Transparency
Units & Rulers
Guides & Grid
Plug-Ins
Adobe Partner Services
Application Updates
Type
Country/Region Selection
OK
Cancel
Reset
Prev
Next

Guides

Canvas: Cyan

Style: Lines

Grid

Color: Custom...

Style: Lines

Gridline every: 10 Percent

Subdivisions: 2

As a great working tip, use the **View** menu to open the edge **rulers**, or better still, use the **Grid** (we will deal with the **Grid** later in this chapter). Note that the default Elements **Grid** is far too busy (too many lines) to be of any practical use, so open **Preferences** (*Ctrl/Cmd + K*) and change the line spacing to something like 10%—you'll see fewer lines, which makes it significantly easier to use correctly. You can also change the grid color. Note that all the design and line-up Grid *helpers* are only visible onscreen: they do not print.

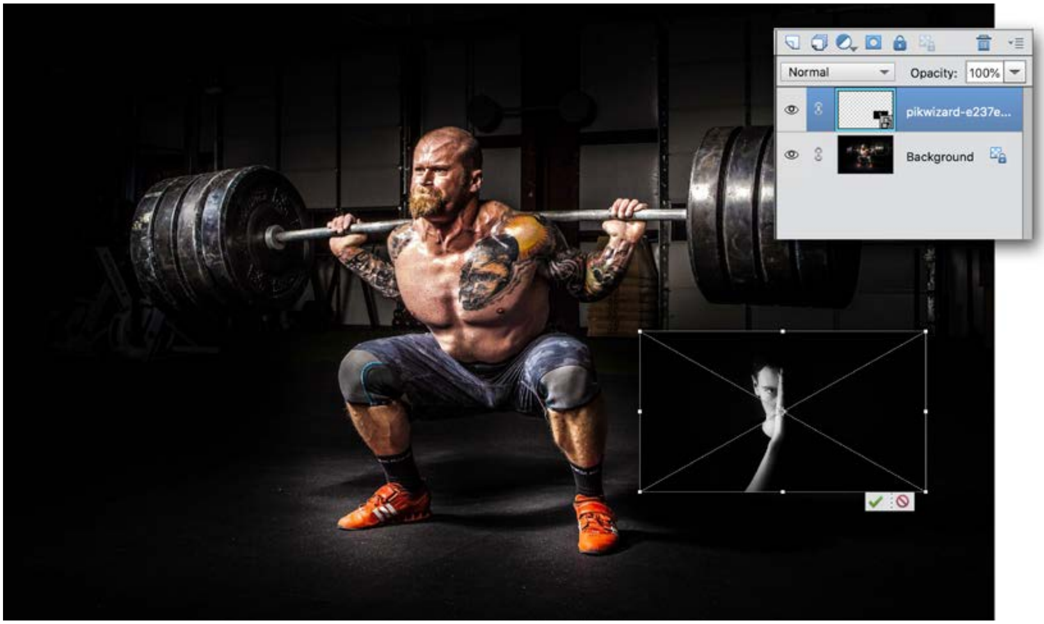
Smart Objects

It's important to note that the process of click-pushing an image from the **Photo Bin** into the (new) master document (on the opposite page) converts a pixel-based image into a feature called a **Smart Object**. You can also import an image by using the **File>Place** command.

Smart Objects are essentially nondestructive layers. This means that you can resize them at will and not damage the pixels - as you might when you resize a pixel-based image layer. They can be used in conjunction with Adjustment Layers and masks.

You can't perform operations that alter pixel data (such as painting, dodging, burning, or cloning) directly to a **Smart Object** layer unless it's first converted into a regular layer, a process called **Simplify Layer** - this changes its status from smart to pixels.

For many processes, a Smart Object has to be converted back to being just a pixel-based image - in fact, Elements will tell you when this is needed - but you can also do it by right-clicking the image later and choosing **Simplify Layer** from the pop-out menu.

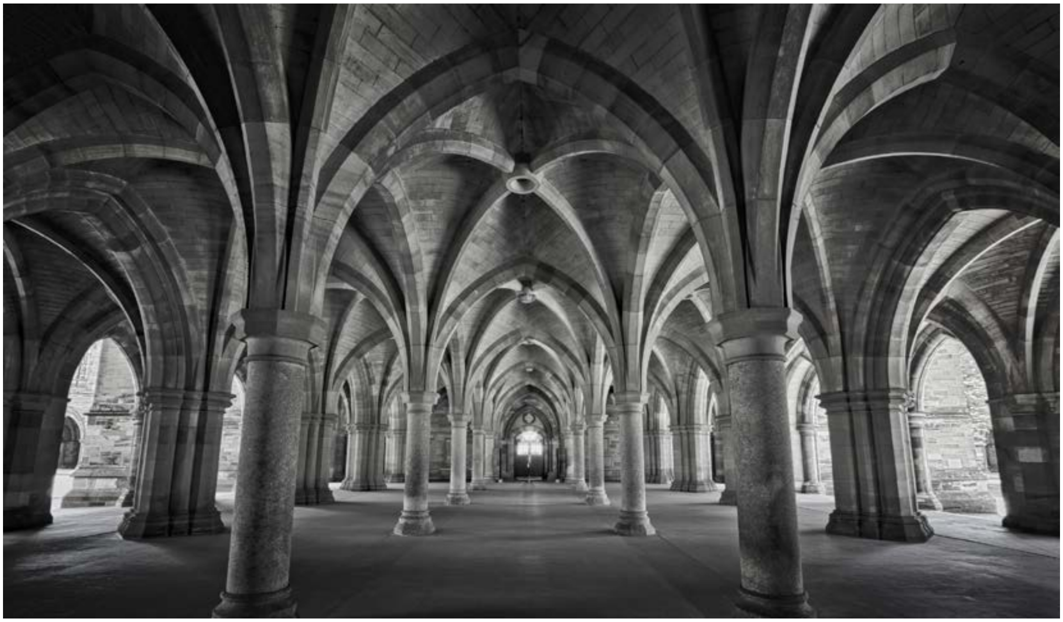


In this screenshot, I have placed the black-and-white portrait of the man into the weightlifter shot. In the **Layer** panel, you can clearly see the smart layer above the background layer - it has a special Smart Layer symbol on it at the bottom right-hand side.

I can stretch the image corner handle in or out to increase or decrease its size - as this is happening, Elements refers back to the original file and updates the quality of the image, depending on whether it's getting larger/smaller. This preserves the image quality, regardless of the magnification applied to it.

Transformations: Correcting perspective

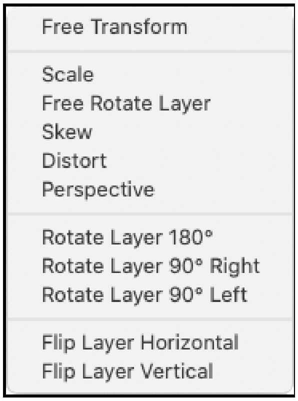
Because most of us photograph from ground level (and therefore point the camera upward at tall structures), our pictures often suffer from increased **optical distortion**. By packing more information into a small frame, the optical system cannot help but distort some of the vertical and horizontal lines. The best way to avoid such distorted perspective would be to shoot horizontally, from an upper floor, opposite a tall building, which means that you're likely to suffer less from optical distortion because there's less reason to tilt the camera. But we are rarely in a position where we can do that, so it's back to street level and optical distortion.



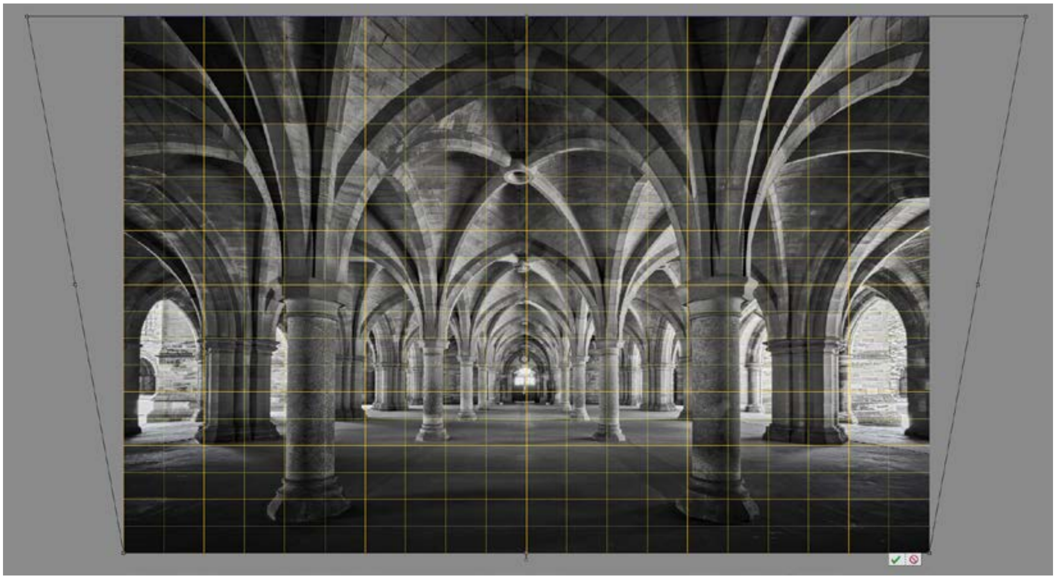
CANON LENS TS-E 24mm 1:3.5 L II
Canon
TS-E 24mm

In the days before software applications such as Photoshop Elements, photographers had to spend upward of $3,000 to buy a **perspective correction** lens (also called a **tilt-shift lens**). These lenses come in 24 mm or 35 mm focal lengths, and allow the user to slide the front element up or down, which in turn corrects vertical lines that happen to be leaning in. These products are beautifully efficient, but cost a lot of money. Don't worry about the dollars, because Photoshop Elements can correct most cases of perspective distortion using the **Transformation** function (which we used to resize pictures for our poster). Here's how it works with a typically distorted architectural shot.

Step one: Open the offending picture. In this case, it's a magnificent vaulted ceiling supported by plenty of stone columns; you can clearly see that the wide-angle lens has added a fair bit of optical distortion to the columns, which we need to fix.

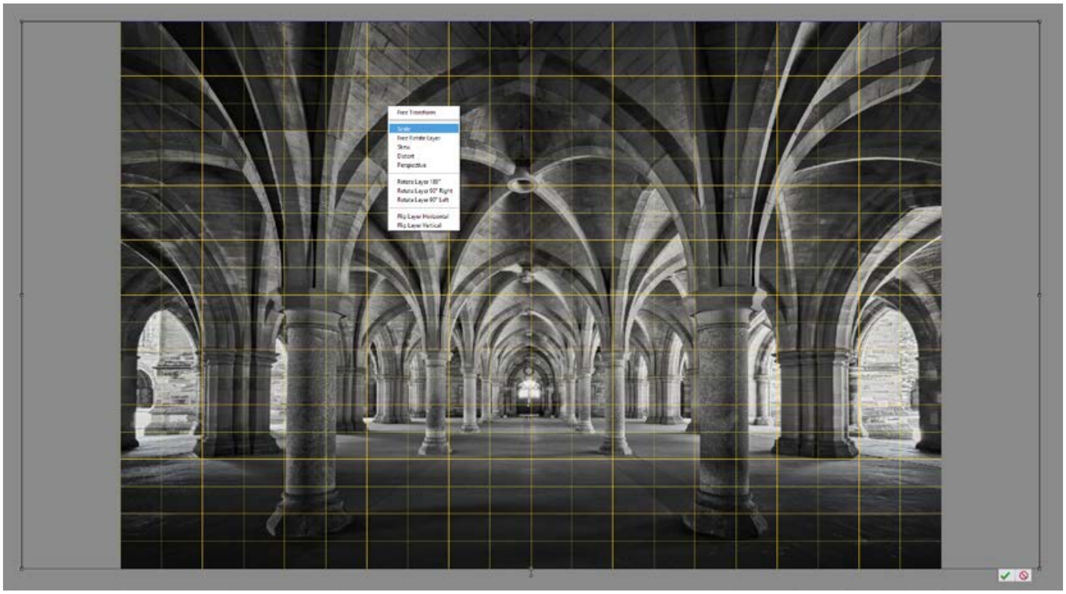

Free Transform
Scale
Free Rotate Layer
Skew
Distort
Perspective
Rotate Layer 180°
Rotate Layer 90° Right
Rotate Layer 90° Left
Flip Layer Horizontal
Flip Layer Vertical

Step two: I use the **Grid** feature (**View**>**Grid**) on all images like this as it provides a more accurate idea of what's vertical and what's not. If the **Grid** is too busy, reduce the number of gridlines and maybe change their color via the program's **Preferences** (**Edit**>**Preferences** or *Ctrl/Cmd + K*).
Here's the magic bit. Turn the **Transformation** feature on **Image**>**Transform**>**Perspective**). The typical corners or handles of the **Transformation** tool appear at the edges of the image frame. Note: *Ctrl/Cmd + T* also starts the transformation tool, but it opens into its **Free Transform** mode (top of the pop-out menu panel seen here).

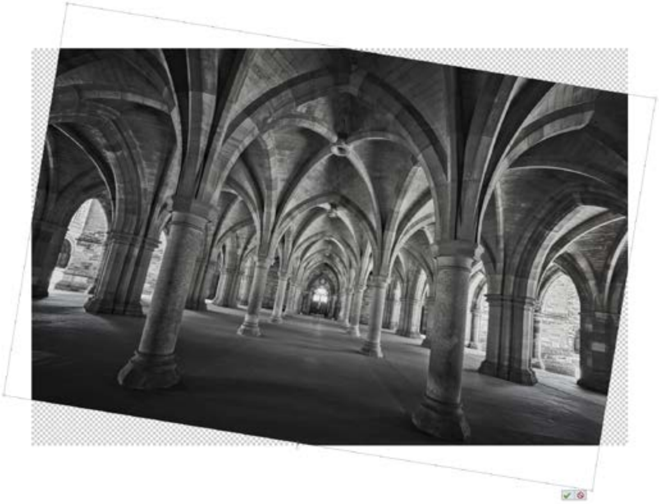


Step three: Grab one of the top corners and drag it outward, away from the image, and note that in doing so, the opposite corner is also dragged out, mirroring your movement. Essentially, you are making the top of the image wider. Keep an eye on the Grid to make sure everything is as symmetrical as possible.

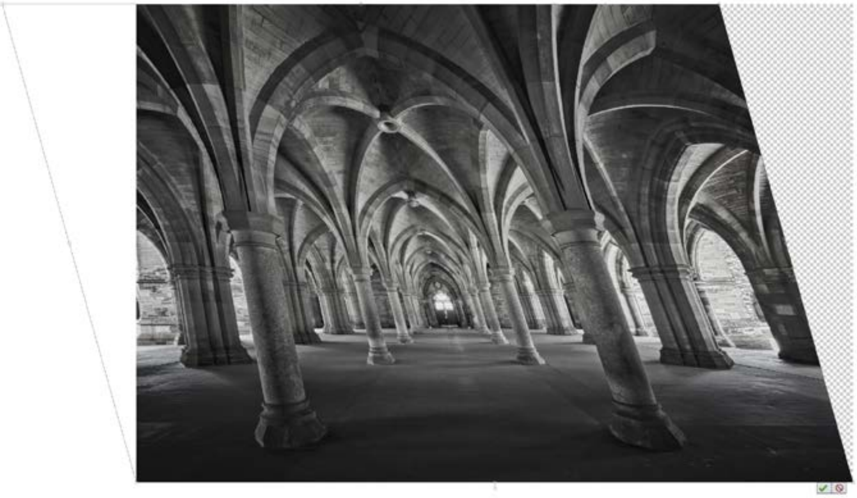
On paper, this technique must read like a dream because all those architectural shots with the building looking as though it's leaning backward can now be corrected. One of the downsides to this technique is that, if the correction is fairly dramatic, you'll also lose a fair amount of the original image as it drags the edges off the picture. Next time you're out shooting architecture, take a few steps further back to encompass more of the surrounding area so that, once edited in Photoshop Elements, you won't lose so many vital details in the transformation process.


Free Transform
Scale
Free Rotate Layer
Skew
Distort
Perspective
Rotate Layer 180°
Rotate Layer 90° Right
Rotate Layer 90° Left
Flip Layer Horizontal
Flip Layer Vertical

Step four: You'll note that the process of widening the top of the image not only loses a few pixels off the side of the rectangular photo, but it also makes it appear to be squatter. I usually finish off by committing that transformation first (click **OK**, or hit *Enter*), then change the **Transform** feature from **Perspective** to **Scale**, then I drag the top-center handle upward to stretch the image higher, and therefore closer in proportion to the original, but without the added distortion. You will lose more of the image doing this, but that's inevitable bearing in mind the pixel manipulations going on! Click the **OK** button, and it's done.

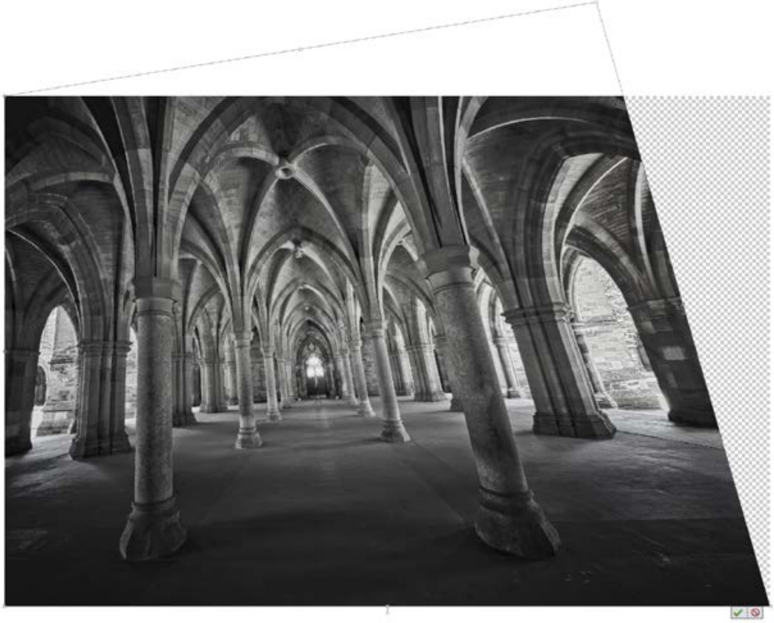


Left: By right-clicking inside that transformation rectangle, you'll notice other modes which include the following. **Free Rotate Layer**: As the name suggests, if you move the cursor to one of the corners, you can click and rotate the entire image or image layer.



Above: Skew: This is an interesting distortion mode. In this mode, if you click and move any one of the central handles (not the corners), you'll see that they only move (skew) left or right. This is a perfect mode to make buildings that appear to be leaning more vertically. That tower in Pisa, Italy, needs to lean no longer.

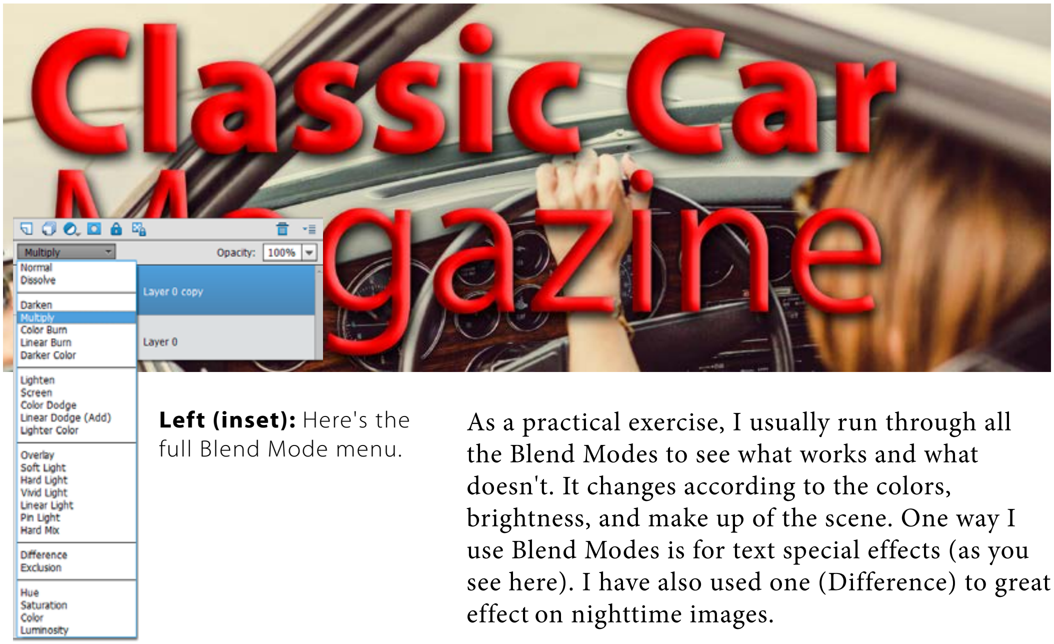
Below: This is the last of the **Transformation** modes - **Distort** (*the default setting when using the Ctrl/Cmd + T* keyboard shortcut). I use this a lot when creating illustrations such as 3D text. Grab a corner and pull and, true to its name, it distorts the frame accordingly. It's a very handy tool to have when none of the others do the trick.



Blend Modes

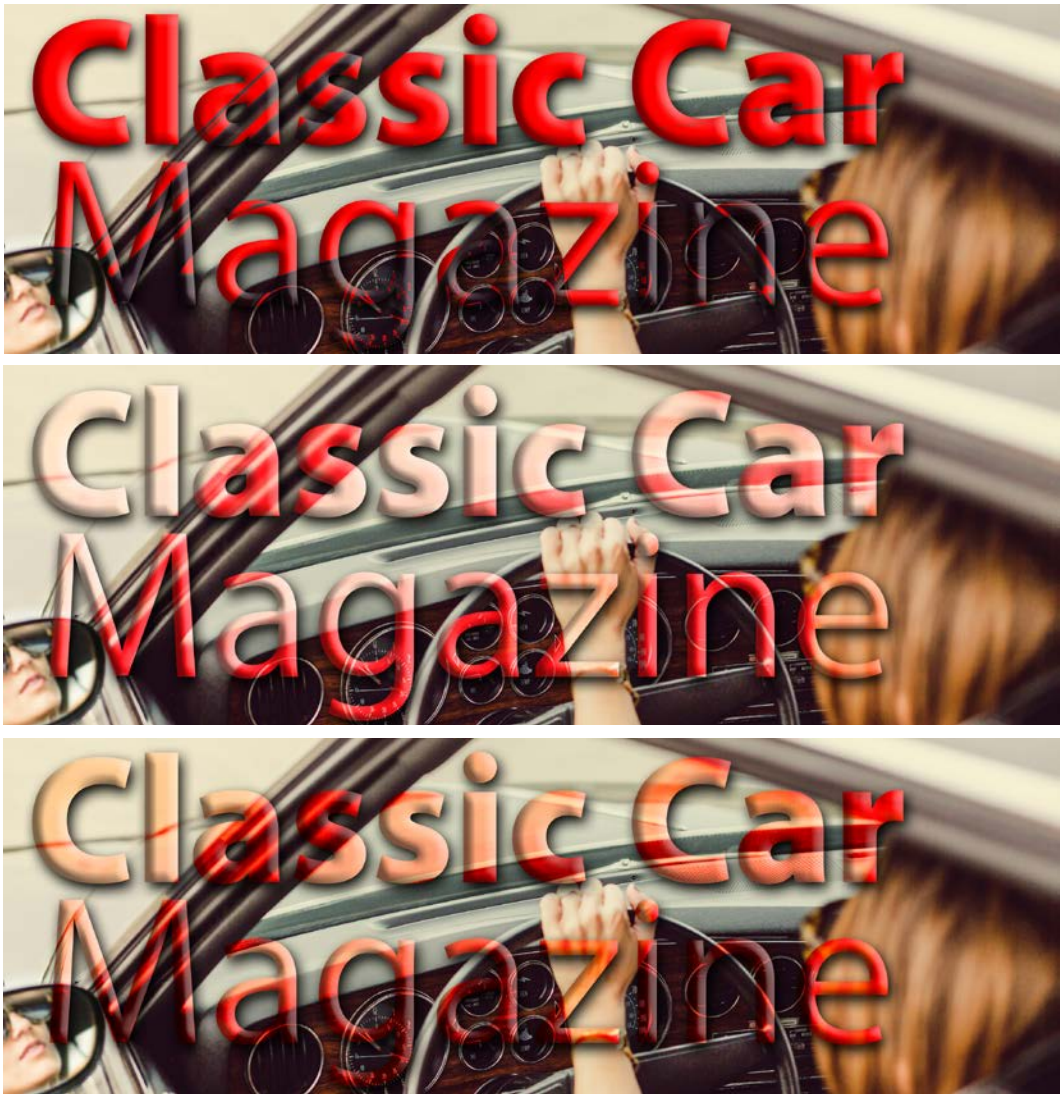
Underneath the Layer panel's row of buttons sits another drop-down menu with 24 settings—these are the **Blend Modes**. They only become active when two or more layers are present in the document. The default setting is **Normal**. It's almost impossible to provide a clear description of what Blend Modes actually do, other than to say that different Blend Modes affect the way the top layer *blends* with the one below it. Some appear to do nothing, while others have a radical effect.

In the following screenshots, I have created a masthead for a fake publication, **Classic Car Magazine**, and have changed the Blend Mode on the text layer (in this exercise, some made no change to the look of the text, so have been left out).


Classic Car
Magazine
Multiply
Opacity: 100%
Normal
Dissolve
Darken
Multiply
Color Burn
Linear Burn
Darker Color
Lighten
Screen
Color Dodge
Linear Dodge (Add)
Lighter Color
Overlay
Soft Light
Hard Light
Vivid Light
Linear Light
Pin Light
Hard Mix
Difference
Exclusion
Hue
Saturation
Color
Luminosity
Layer 0 copy
Layer 0

Left (inset): Here's the full Blend Mode menu.

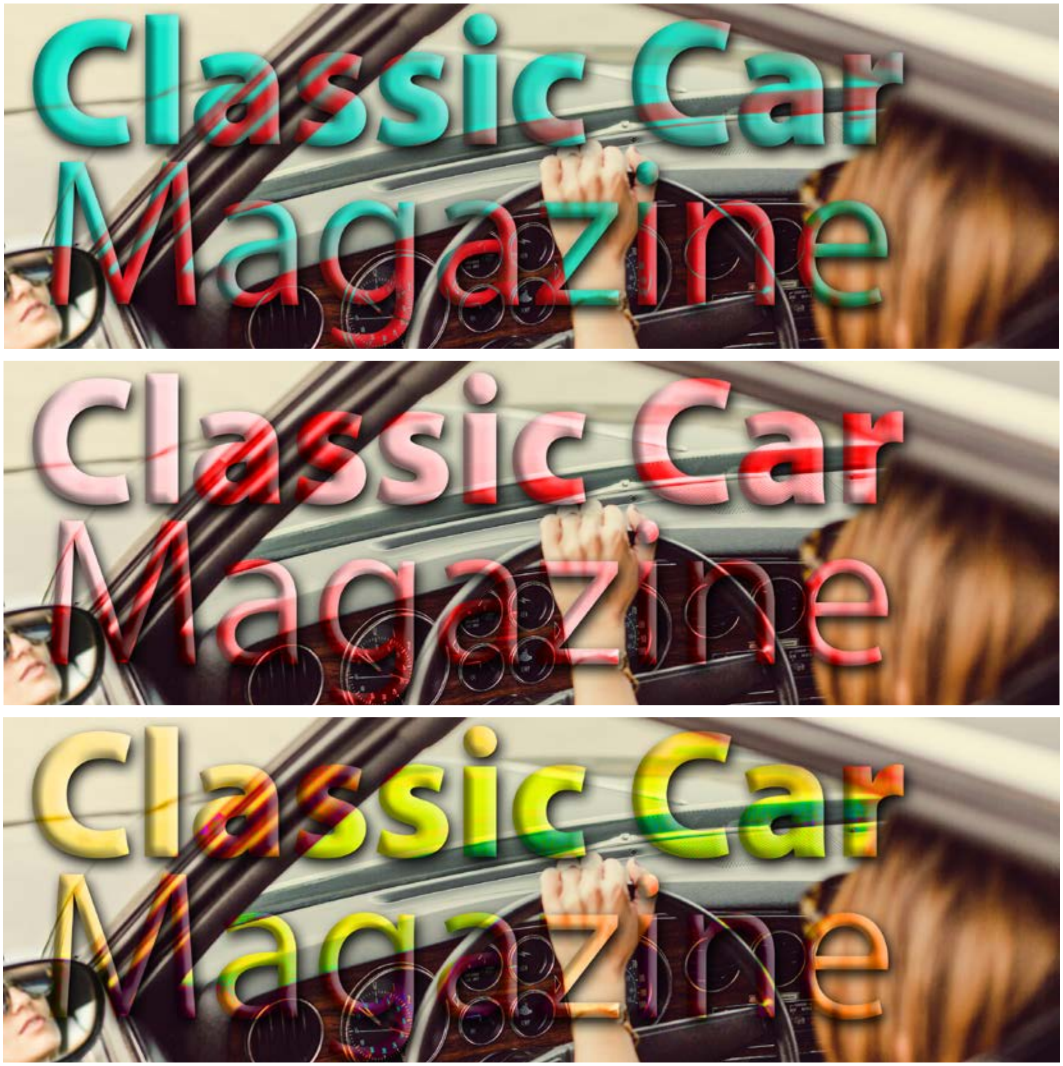
As a practical exercise, I usually run through all the Blend Modes to see what works and what doesn't. It changes according to the colors, brightness, and make up of the scene. One way I use Blend Modes is for text special effects (as you see here). I have also used one (Difference) to great effect on nighttime images.



The best advice is to try them yourself, then decide whether they are improving your edit or not.

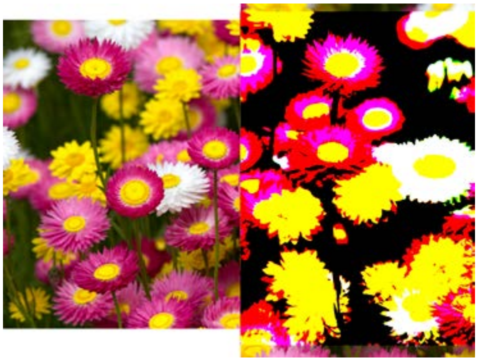
Note also that most of Elements' brush-based tools can also be set to operate in a specific Blend Mode. If you take a paint brush and set that tool's Blend Mode to **Exclusion**, for example, any subsequent brushing will produce a reversed-out color to the one you see in the image above.

Above, listed from the top: the **Darken**, **Linear Burn**, **Lighter Color**, and **Overlay** Blend Modes in action. **Previous page, bottom**: Another way to use Blend Modes is to duplicate the image layer (so you have two identical layers), then flip the top layer horizontally so it's back to front, then change the Blend Mode for the top layer from Normal to Overlay to product this double image effect.


Classic Car
Magazine
Classic Car
Magazine
Classic Car
Magazine

Above, from the top: In these examples, the **Difference**, **Color**, and **Saturation** Blend Modes made the most noticeable differences to the norm.

Right: In some cases, changing the Blend Mode makes little or no difference, while others can produce extreme graphic color effects, such as the flowers on the right. The posterized effect is created by changing the top Blend Mode to **Hard Mix** - it's an instant Andy Warhol-esque result!



Keyboard shortcuts

As with most editing, you can lose sight of the image-making process and become too immersed in the more complex editing functions. Keyboard shortcuts are there to help spread the load, reduce RSI, and generally speed up your workflow. I use the first three of the following list repeatedly. It's beneficial to memorize some of the tool access keys (single letters) to make it easier to jump from process to process. Some of these are shown in the following list:

- Duplicate the (active) layer: *Ctrl/Cmd + J*
- Use this to deselect or remove any active selection: *Ctrl/Cmd + D*
- Use this to transform objects on the active layer: *Ctrl/Cmd + T*
- Merge down: *Ctrl/Cmd + E*
- Merge (all) visible layers: *Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + E*
- Burn, Dodge, and Sponge tools: *O*
- Selection brushes (Quick Selection, Selection Brush, Magic Wand, Refine Selection, and Auto Selection): *A*
- Lasso tools (Freehand Lasso, Polygonal Lasso, and Magnetic Lasso): *L*
- Clone Stamp tool (also the Pattern Stamp): *S*
- Spot Healing and Healing brushes: *J*
- Brushes (Brush tool, Impressionist Brush, and Color Replace Brush): *B*
- Eraser brushes (Eraser, Background Eraser, and Magic Eraser brushes): *E*
- Paint Bucket tool: *K*
- Gradient tool: *G*
- **Enhance**>**Select Subject**: *Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + S*

Out of the hundreds of possible keyboard shortcuts published for this program, I consider those on this page to be the most important. They sum up the most practical features in this program and, once learned, will advance your understanding and editing proficiency tenfold.

Summary

As you may well now be aware, it's possible to spend your entire working life immersed in the realms of commercial photography and professional retouching.

All the tools are abundantly present in Photoshop Elements, but if you need to take the control you require to a higher level, this was certainly the chapter for you.

In this chapter, we ramped up the knowledge that this book has explored so far by introducing you to Layers - in its basic, easy-to-use pseudo form, and then in its most advanced guise: Adjustment Layers and full-on Layer Masking.

You also learned how to enhance images and create powerful graphic effects using Blend Modes, Layer Opacity, Layer Transformations, and much more.

Learning how to use layers like this will enhance your creativity tenfold. But that's not all: we also highlighted the power of the erasing tools, along with the often misunderstood but very useful Gradient tool.

Coming up in the next chapter are more extremely practical sections that extend your new experiences with Layers. We'll take a close look at the intricacies of beauty retouching using the Clone Stamp and Healing Brush tools, as well as learn how to improve images with the amazing Burn, Dodge, and Sponge Brush tools. This chapter also covers how to work with another powerful Elements tool: selection, used to limit the edit process to specific parts of the image only. The final part of the chapter takes you in the direction of the graphic designer with the use of text, and all its different applications, using special effects.

6

Advanced Techniques: Retouching, Selections, and Text

With the experience of understanding **Layers** now safely in your repertoire of skills, it's time to look a little closer at developing your retouching skills. Elements has a range of very high-end tools with which to perfect your work—whether it's portraiture, weddings, or landscapes.

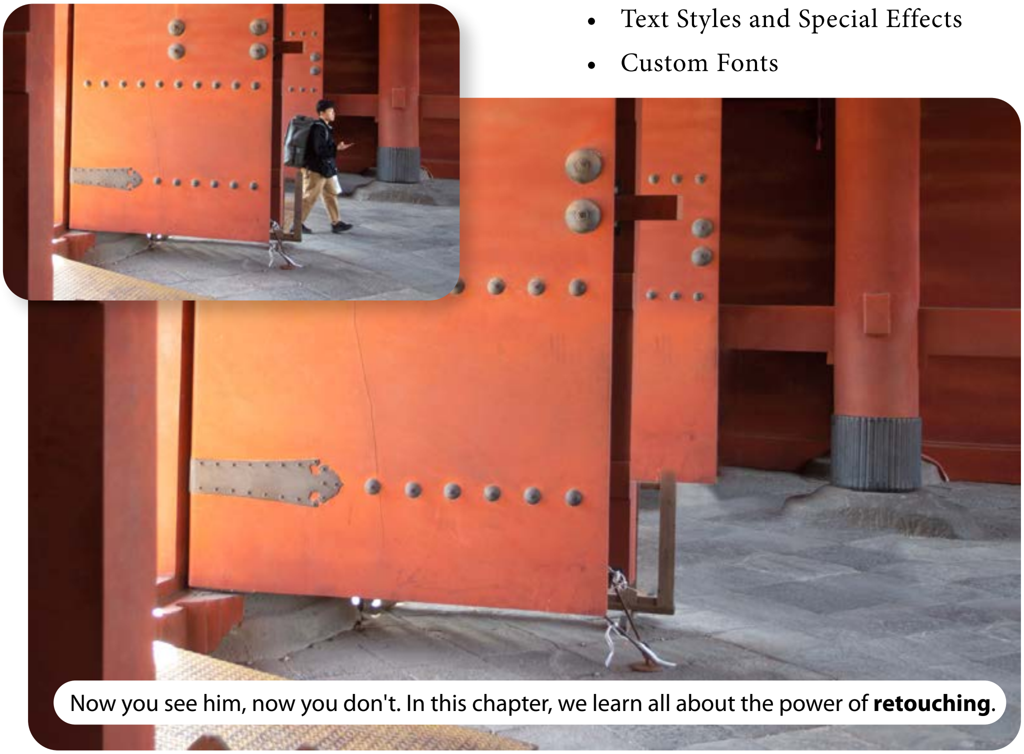
One of the big issues with regular tone editing tools such as **Levels** and **Hue/Saturation** is that their effects are global—everything in the image is affected proportionally. To limit the spread of these effects to a specific part of the frame, we look at making selections, using a wide range of tools that come with Elements that are designed for all types of selection scenarios.

And if this is not enough, the last section in this chapter is designed to ease you slightly in the direction of the graphic designer as we look at creating illustrations using Elements' range of downloadable graphics, and using text in all its forms, shapes, and effects. There's also a roundup of very useful tools that often get passed over by some publications; for example, the excellent **Custom Shape** tool, **Cookie Cutter**, **Paint Bucket**, and more.

In short, this chapter is designed to build on the lessons of the previous one. We'll be building up and focusing your editing, and in particular, your retouching skills, so, with the right inspiration, you can create almost anything with this awesome software.

Here's what we will learn in this chapter:

- Retouching: Spot Healing Brush and Clone Stamp Tools
- Burn, Dodge, and Sponge Brush tools
- Blur, Sharpen, and Smudge Brushes
- Selection modifiers
- Lasso Tool
- Magic Wand Tool
- Saving Selections
- Feathering Selections
- Selection Brush Tool
- Quick Selection Tool
- Refine Selection Brush
- Auto Selection Tool
- Refine Edge Function
- Adding Text to Images
- Type Options Panel
- Text Styles and Special Effects
- Custom Fonts



Now you see him, now you don't. In this chapter, we learn all about the power of **retouching**.

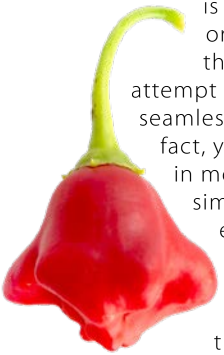
Retouching: Spot Healing Brush and Clone Stamp Tools

In this section, we'll look at how to correct the tones, imperfections, and *look* of a simple beauty shot, step-by-step.

During this process, you'll learn how to use both the **Spot Healing Brush** tool and the powerful **Clone Stamp** tool, one of the original and, in my opinion, best retouching tools in Elements. (The **Clone Stamp** tool was inherited from Adobe Photoshop in the years before Photoshop even contemplated being part of Creative Cloud).

In effect, the **Clone Stamp** tool is little more than a **copy-and-paste tool**. It works in a similar way to a word processing application, where you might copy and paste a paragraph of text from one part of a document to another, except that it copies image pixels rather than text.

The key point to remember when using the **Clone Stamp** (and **Spot Healing Brush**) is that you first need to identify a clear **Source** area. This is an area where the "good" pixels are copied from. If you can find an area in the image that closely matches the color, texture, and brightness of the damaged section (called the **Target** area), it will make the copy-and-paste retouching action 100% easier and significantly more convincing.

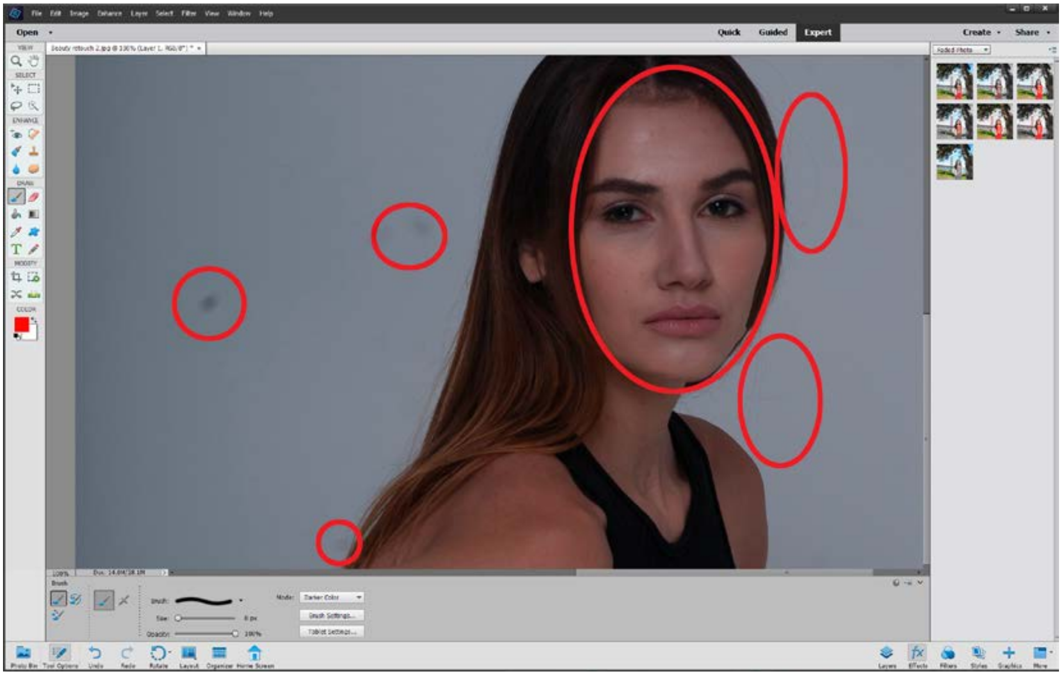


The **Clone Stamp** cannot easily blend pixels in the way the **Spot Healing Brush** can. So, if your source area is a little more textured or darker/brighter than the target area, any attempt at trying to retouch seamlessly is going to fail. In fact, you'll discover that, in most instances, there simply might not be enough pixels of the same color/texture/brightness to make it work at all. Although this sounds like a disastrous PR exercise for the **Clone Stamp**, bear in mind that there are occasions where copying precisely from point A to point B might just be what's needed. For example, you might want to make your chili harvest look a little more productive. In this example I photographed one chili on a plain white background, then, using the **Clone Stamp** tool, copied it onto a separate layer so it could be resized and rotated. I now have a much more prolific chili harvest!

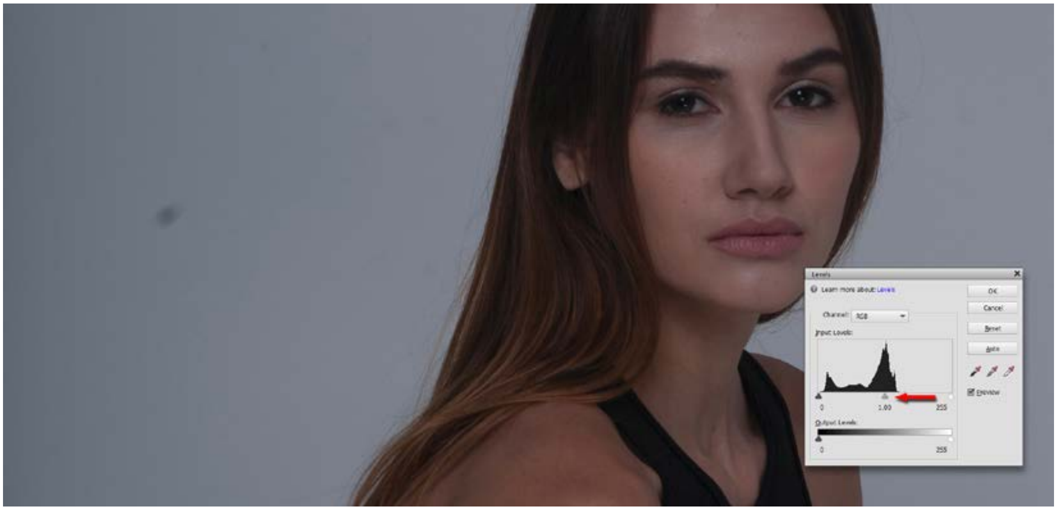
More commonly, beauty retouchers use the **Clone Stamp**, set with a **low opacity value**, to copy and paste pixels again, and again, and again, while moving the target area slightly with each mouse click—this effectively softens the target area, brilliant for smoothing out skin tones to create a porcelain look that's harder to achieve using either of the Healing Brushes.

To familiarize ourselves with retouching, we'll be using this unedited file (seen in the following screenshot) to practice on. It needs help—as you can appreciate, it's dark and murky, plus it has quite a few other problem areas that need to be fixed: stray strands of hair, shiny skin, and sensor spots, to name a few. When working on any retouching job it's a good idea to **plan your editing steps** in the order in which you want them done. For example, there's no point in trying to perfect the color till the brightness is fixed, and if the image is dark, you won't see all the blemishes that might need removing.

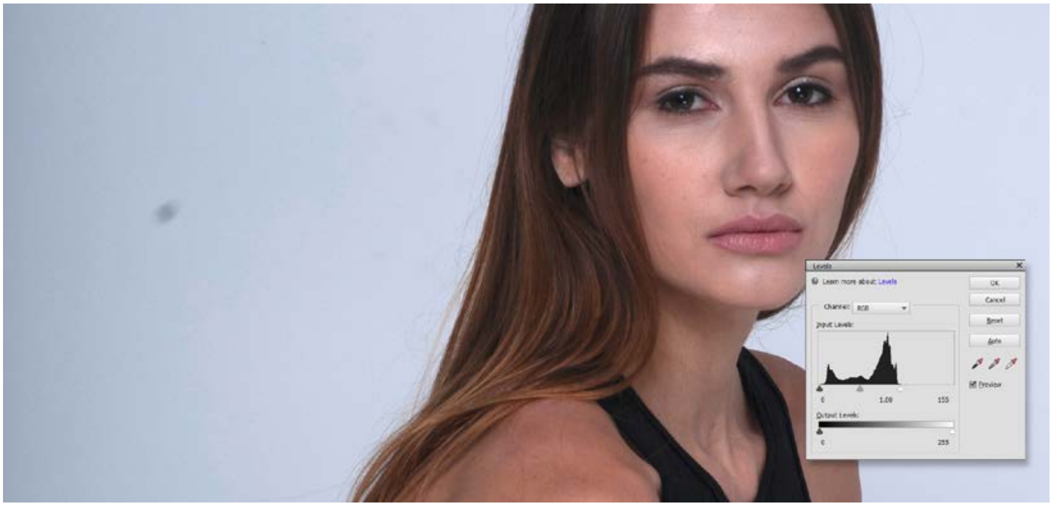
In the following set of images, I'll demonstrate how to edit such a picture, and while the actions are specific to this model shot, the issues are common to many of our images. As a result of these actions, we should be in a position to radically improve the look of the sample image.



Step one - identify the problem areas: I have circled some points in the image that we might want to edit. First the photo desperately needs brightening. Then, even though the model has excellent skin, we might want to provide a little minor retouching, skin smoothing, and localized lightening. We can also fix up any small strands of hair that the stylist might have missed. Irrespective of the subject matter, the more you enlarge an image, the more imperfections you'll see, so it pays to consider the **final viewing size** before you spend too much time editing parts of the subject to a level of detail that no viewer will ever appreciate.

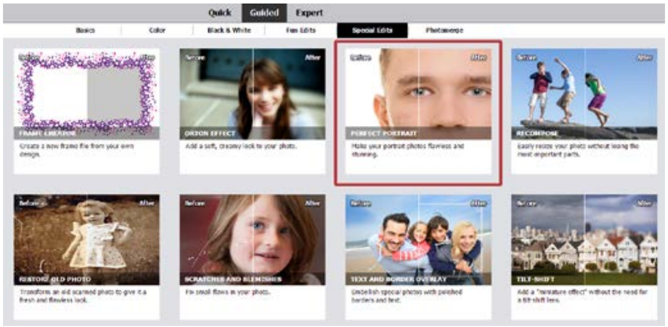

Levels
Learn more about: Levels
Channel: RGB
Input Levels:
0
1.00
255
Output Levels:
0
255
OK
Cancel
Reset
Auto
Preview

Step two: As with most editing projects, I like to ***duplicate the layer*** first. It's not essential, but I like to have the original handy so I can refer back to that, and other layers, as I proceed. To duplicate the layer, go to **Layer**>**Duplicate**. Also note that, because this is quite an involved edit, it's good practice to actually ***name your layers*** as you go (for example, `hair`, `eyes`, and so on). I used **Levels** to lighten the tones in the duplicated layer first (*Ctrl/Cmd + L*).


Levels
Learn more about: Levels
Channel: RGB
Input Levels:
0
1.00
155
Output Levels:
0
255
OK
Cancel
Reset
Auto
Preview

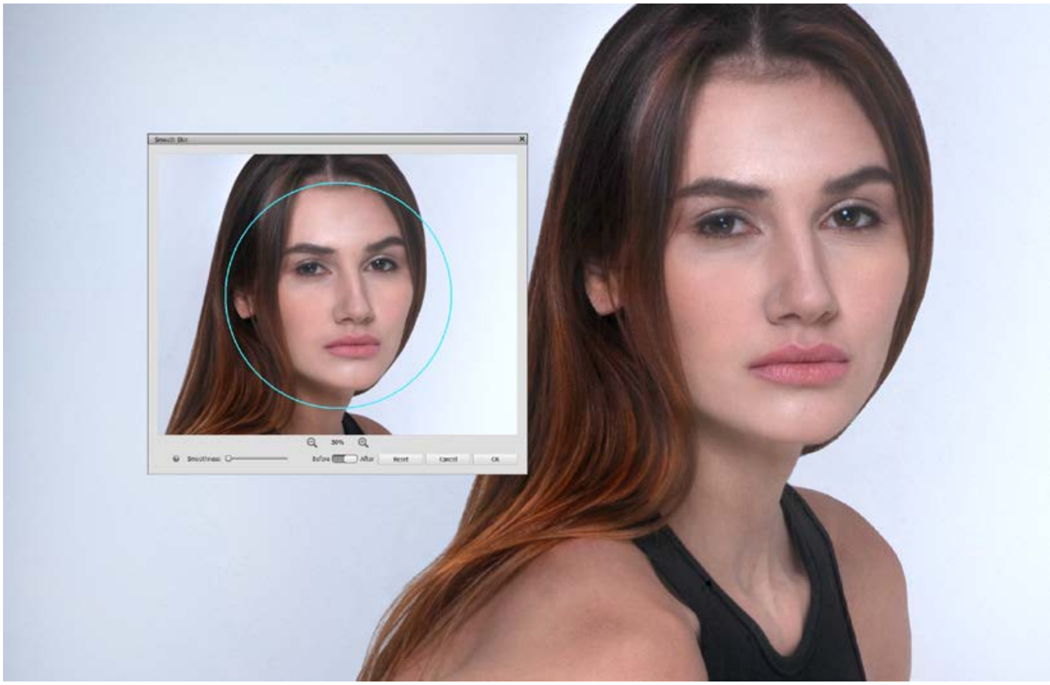
Sensor spot trouble: With the image now considerably lighter, you can clearly see more blemishes, not least the **sensor spots**, or blobs against the background—these are caused by dirt or moisture getting into the camera (usually while a lens is being changed). You can have the sensor professionally cleaned for around US$45 or you could buy a set of **sensor swabs** and do it yourself. But the quickest and most economical method of smoothing out and beautifying skin tones would be to use either the **Perfect Portrait** feature (found in the **Guided Edit** mode) or use the new **Smooth Skin** feature that you'll find in Elements' **Expert** Mode. Here we'll use the **Spot Healing Brush** and the **Clone Stamp** tools.

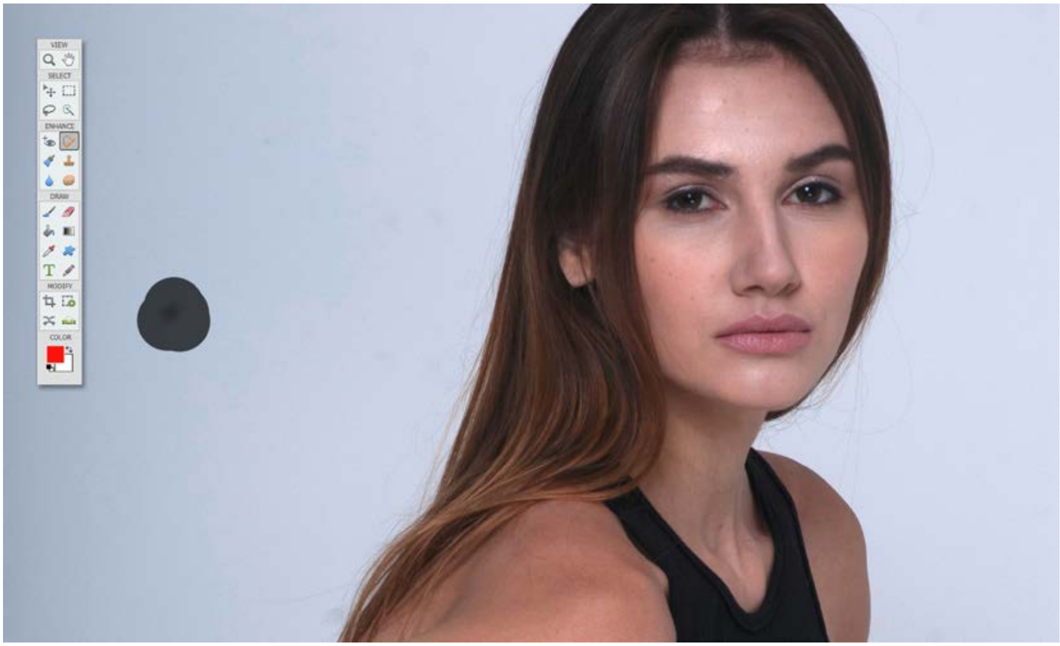
The Smooth Skin feature

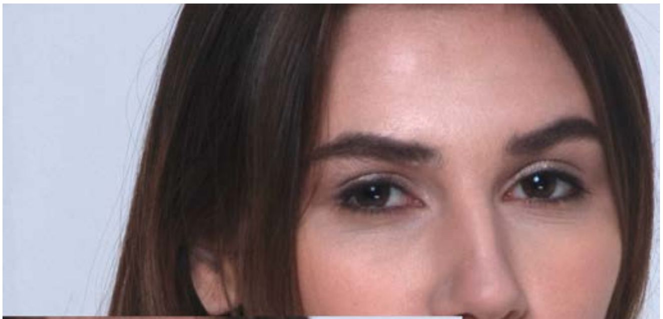

Quick
Guided
Expert
Basics
Color
Black & White
Fun Edits
Special Edits
Photomerge
Before
After
FRAME CREATOR
ORTON EFFECT
PERFECT PORTRAIT
RECOMPOSE
RESTORE OLD PHOTO
SCRATCHES AND BLEMISHES
TEXT AND BORDER OVERLAY
TILT-SHIFT

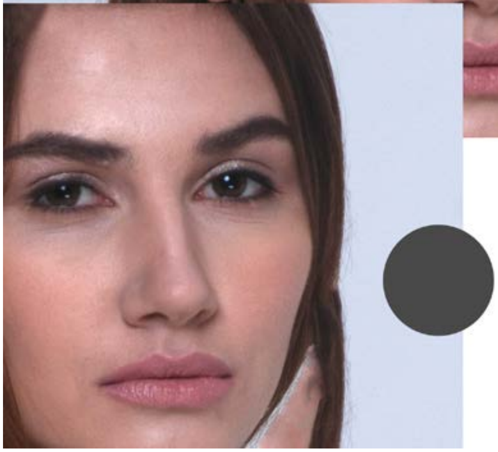
If you are stuck for time, or don't want the effort of learning the basics of retouching using the **Clone Stamp** or **Spot Healing Brush** tools, use the **Perfect Portrait** feature or, maybe simpler still, use Elements' new **Enhance>Smooth Skin** feature. As you can clearly see in the screen grab on the left, **Perfect Portrait** also allows you to increase the contrast (which I did here), use the retouching tools, and add a beautiful glow, all in the space of a few minutes. It's a great feature that, like most of Elements' semi-automated processes, works almost flawlessly, as seen below.

The new **Smooth Skin** feature, found under the **Enhance** menu, is simpler than Perfect Portrait. It isolates the face automatically (as you see here in the inset screen) and offers a degree of softening effect and a preview **On/Off** slider. The result that you can see in the second image here is impressive (see below), but note that it doesn't work unless the AI can detect a face in the image.


Smooth Skin
50%
Smoothness
Before
After
Reset
Cancel
OK



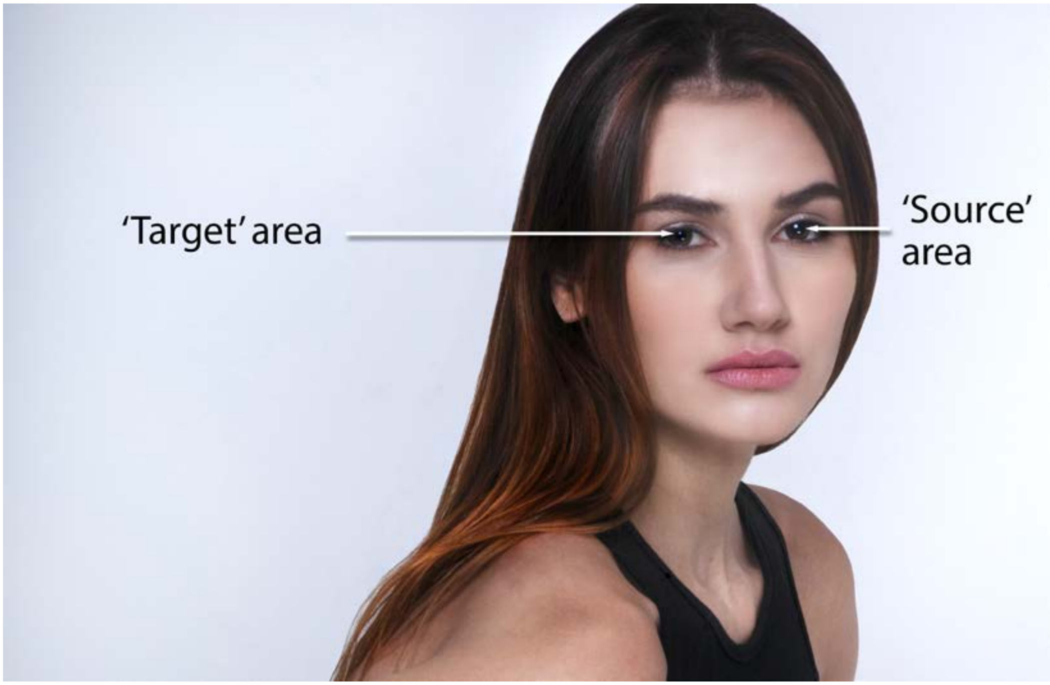




Step three, above: Removing the sensor spots would be my first job using the **Spot Healing Brush** tool. This should be an easy **click-and-move-on** process because the brush simply copies pixels from the outer areas of the brush shape (usually a circle) and pastes them into the inner area, while matching those pixels' tones and color. It's the perfect tool for this step.

Step four: Closer in, I held the mouse button and dragged the cursor along some straggly hair on the right-hand side of the face. Even though my freehand action was very wobbly, it covered the required bits and, because the background is nice and even, the stray hair was banished instantly.

Step five (on the left): I chose a larger brush size, hoping to retouch the stray hair in one swipe. But, as you can see, the model now has two chins. The larger the brush, the further the software "looks" for pixels to blend into the brush shape. Running too close to the model's face created pixel mayhem.



Step six: Cloning is a different type of retouching process compared to the **Spot Healing Brush** and regular **Healing Brush** tools. With the **Clone Stamp** tool, although it's a copy-and-paste process similar to the **Healing Brush**'s action, *it does not match the pixel's color*, *tone*, or *brightness*. Therefore, if you paste light pixels over dark pixels, it shows up as light on dark. So, how is this tool going to be helpful here? Follow these steps to find out.

Firstly, choose the **Clone Stamp** tool (by using the *S* key or selecting it from **Tool Bar>Enhance**). Choose a soft brush tip, setting its **opacity** to around 50–75%, then ensure that the **Alignment** checkbox in the tool's **Options** panel is set to **Off**.

What I did here was to copy the highlights in the model's right eye and paste them over the (less bright) highlight in the left eye (as indicated in the screenshot). With a brush tip about the same size as the subject being copied, I held the *Alt/Opt key down, then* clicked into the right eye. This is referred to as the **Source area**. The program copies the pixels into the computer's **virtual memory**.

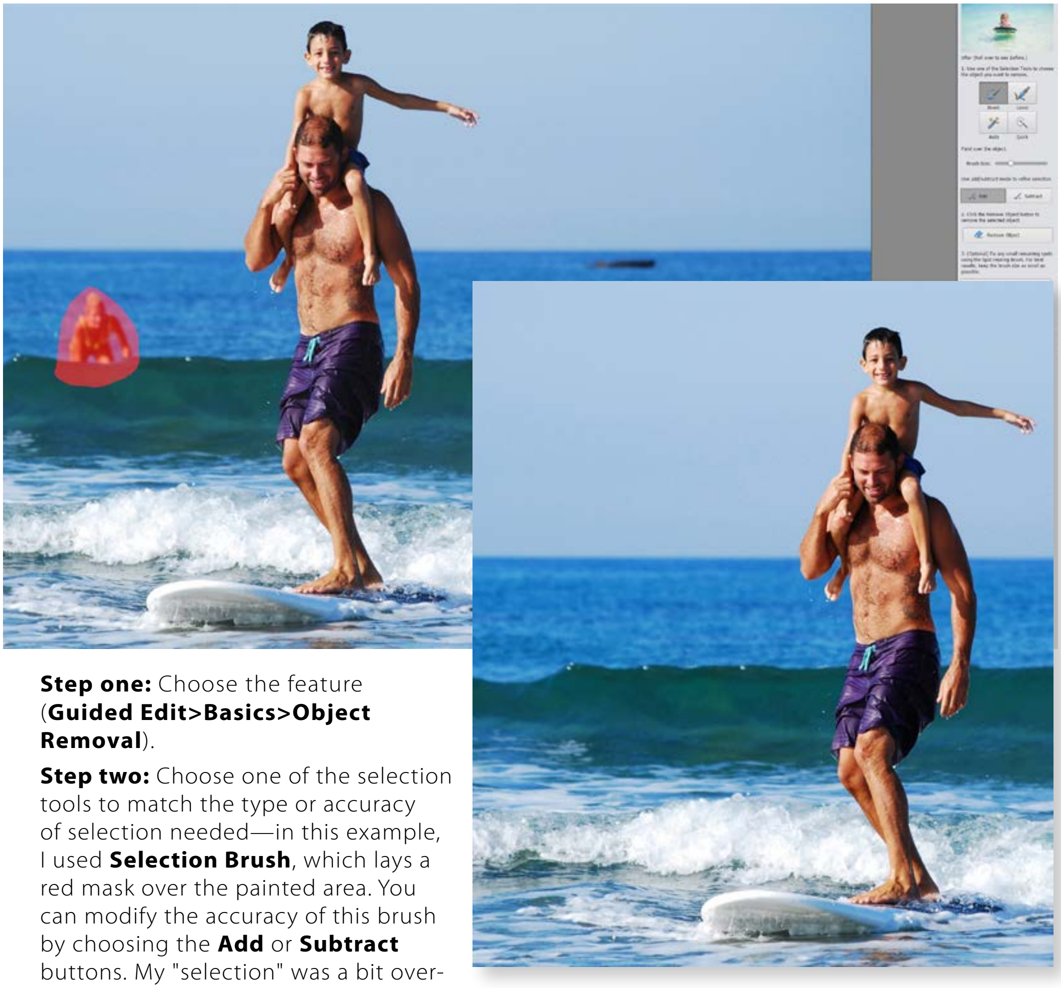
Release the mouse button, and move the cursor from the source area to the area to be fixed (point B, in this example). This is referred to as the **Target area**. Click once. In this case, the tool was set with an opacity of 75%, so it only transferred 75% of the highlight from the right eye.

Retouching tips:

Make sure that the brush tip is approximately the same size as the blemish, or a little larger. If it's too big, it might copy in parts of the image you don't want to use for the repair. Too small and it might just leave a smudge. Note also that you can click-hold-drag the cursor across and around the blemish to create a larger retouch area.

The Object Removal tool

Elements has this great new AI-driven selection feature, **Object Removal**, designed to make the retouching process as easy and as painless as possible.



Step one: Choose the feature (**Guided Edit>Basics>Object Removal**).

Step two: Choose one of the selection tools to match the type or accuracy of selection needed—in this example, I used **Selection Brush**, which lays a red mask over the painted area. You can modify the accuracy of this brush by choosing the **Add** or **Subtract** buttons. My "selection" was a bit over-generous but once **Remove Object** is pressed, the magic happens. In this example, the surfer in the background disappeared seamlessly in a matter of seconds.

Tip:

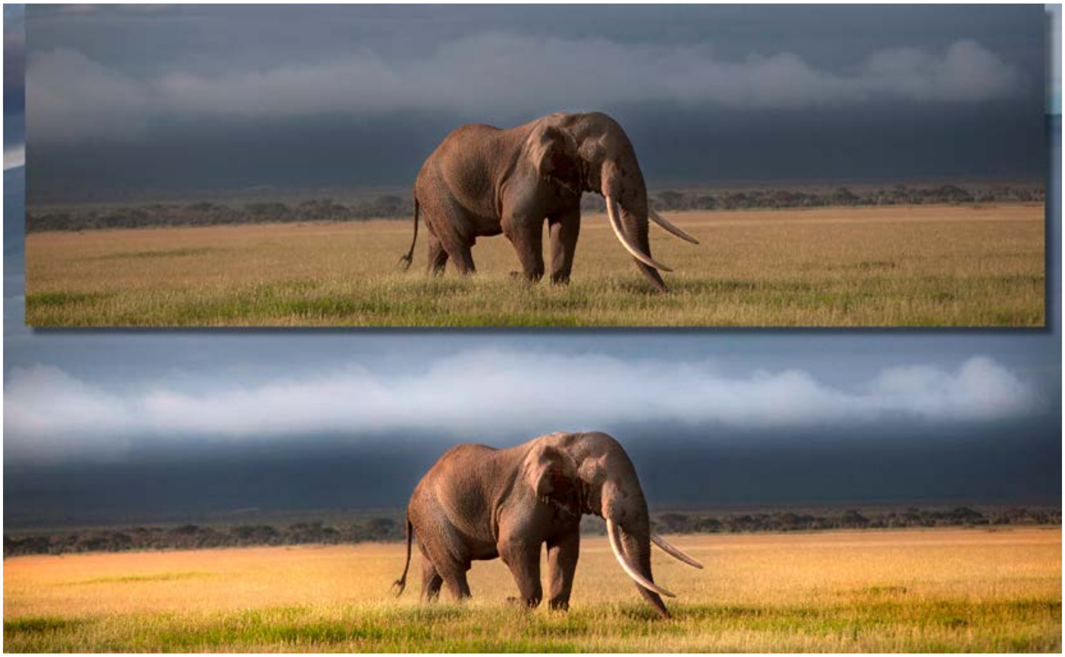
Although **Guided** Edit's **Object Removal** feature is a great feature, Adobe has developed another sophisticated AI-driven selection tool simply named **Select Subject** (**Select>Subject**).

As its name suggests, its job is to select the subject in the image automatically. In this new feature, you don't even have to draw roughly around the subject; Elements finds it for you. Really. And the good news is that in most of my test images, this worked seamlessly.

Retouching: the Burn, Dodge, and Sponge Tools

The **Burn**, **Dodge**, and **Sponge Tools** are probably the best unsung heroes of Elements. Why? Simple: they are easy to use and are very effective visually.

The **Burn** and **Dodge** tools are electronic representations of what I did for years in a black and white printing lab. "Burning-in" a photo was a technique for making part of a print darker than the rest of the image—using something like a cardboard mask with a hole in it to make it happen. After the base exposure was done, I'd continue to expose the print—but only the bits of it that I needed to go darker—by holding the cardboard mask between the enlarger lamp and the photo paper. By gently moving the card mask so that the additional exposure only fell onto the area, I could manipulate the global exposure to that of a custom exposure. The dodging tool worked in reverse—a bit of card taped to some wire and held between the enlarger lamp and photo paper to stop light getting to parts of the print that would have otherwise come out too dark. When it worked, the results were good, but it was hit and miss and could never be repeated accurately. Then came Photoshop Elements, and my retouching life changed forever.

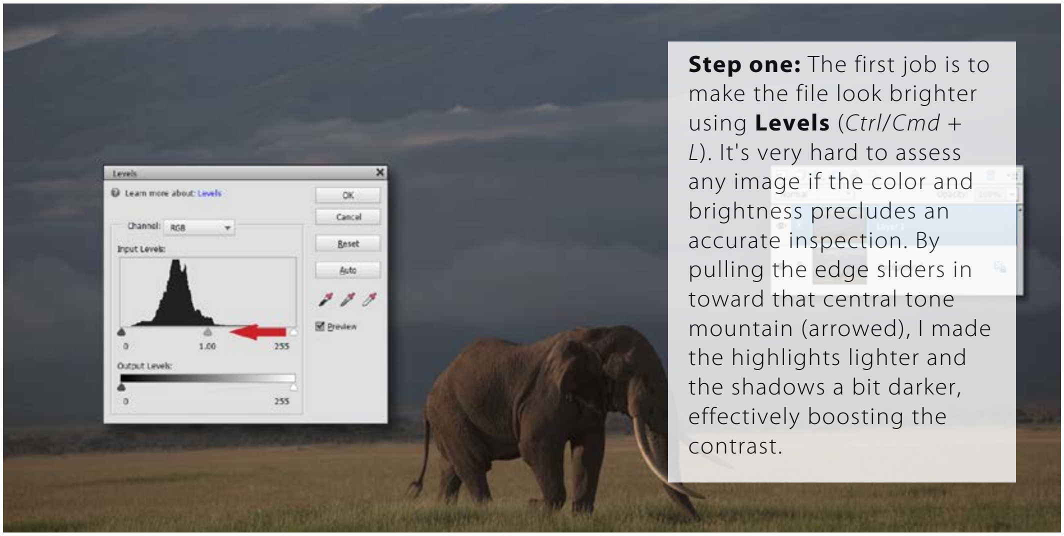


Before and after comparison: The lower image of the African elephant shows what you can achieve using these selective darkening/lightening brushes—add life to shady areas, while dramatically darkening other tones to add impact to the composition. The RAW image was underexposed in order to capture as much detail in the brilliant snowy peak (which can't currently be seen), which left the tones in the lower section of the frame rather dull looking and in dire need of attention! Let's see what we can do to improve the image.

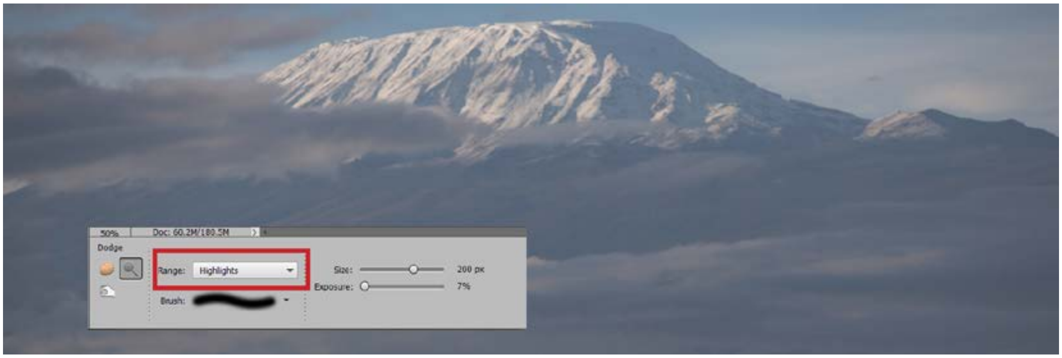
All three tools work just like a paint brush. The brush tip has a variable size for different problem areas, a variable hardness, and a massive range of different shapes. But the real strength of these tools is in the tonal range that you can set them to operate in: **highlights**, **midtones**, and **shadows** (note that the **Sponge Tool** only has a **Saturate** and a **Desaturate** mode).

With these tools, I can "paint" darkness into the shadows, lighten the highlights, or increase the local color saturation of almost any part of almost any image. Here's what these tools can do:

- **Burn Tool**: Use this brush to darken the shadows, midtones, or highlights of your image. It's best to start with the **Exposure** setting at 10% or 15%—any higher and your brushing becomes hard to conceal. Choose a largish brush size, and a soft-edge brush tip to further conceal brush marks. The lower the **Exposure** setting, the more brush strokes you might need, but the more subtle the effect. Burning in the shadows has the most dramatic effect; burning in a highlight, especially one that's already nearly white, often makes the area look muddy because there's no tone there to actually burn in, so dial it back a bit. I start by darkening the midtones first, and only then do I move on to the shadows.
- **Dodge Tool**: Use this to lighten details in the shadows, midtones, and highlights. Trying to lighten details in the dark shadows often makes the tones appear ghostly—not a good look. This brush works best if it's used to lighten/brighten midtones and highlights. Like the **Burn** brush, you should keep the **Exposure** set to between 5% and 10% to avoid over-brightening the highlights and clipping tones (thereby losing detail permanently). Lightening highlights and darkening midtones/shadows really pumps up local contrast.
- **Sponge Tool**: Use this feature to increase the saturation (richness) of color that's already in the file or to desaturate the color until it eventually turns black and white. This is useful when you want to knock back over-colorful parts of an image that are detracting from the subject matter.

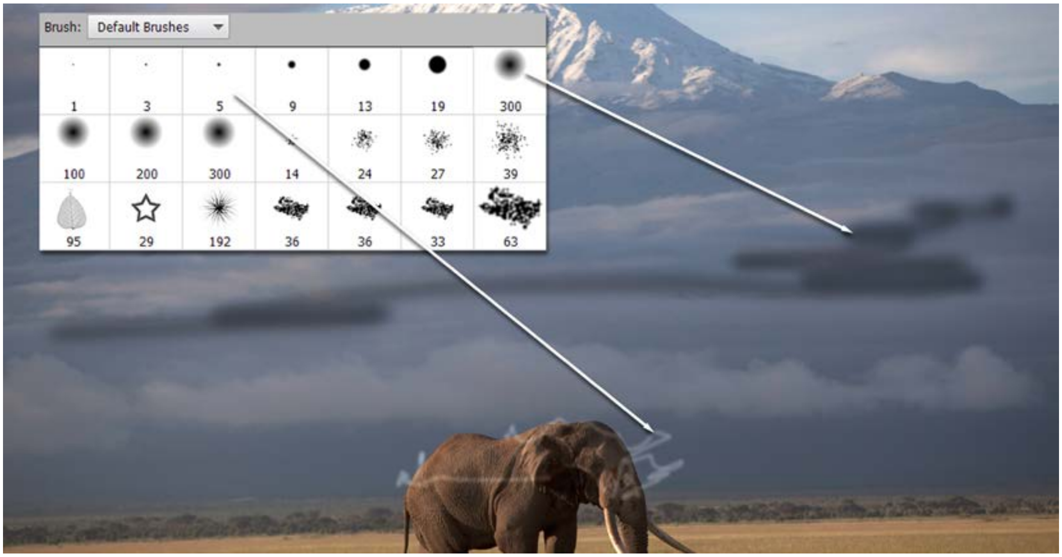


Step one: The first job is to make the file look brighter using **Levels** (*Ctrl/Cmd + L*). It's very hard to assess any image if the color and brightness precludes an accurate inspection. By pulling the edge sliders in toward that central tone mountain (arrowed), I made the highlights lighter and the shadows a bit darker, effectively boosting the contrast.



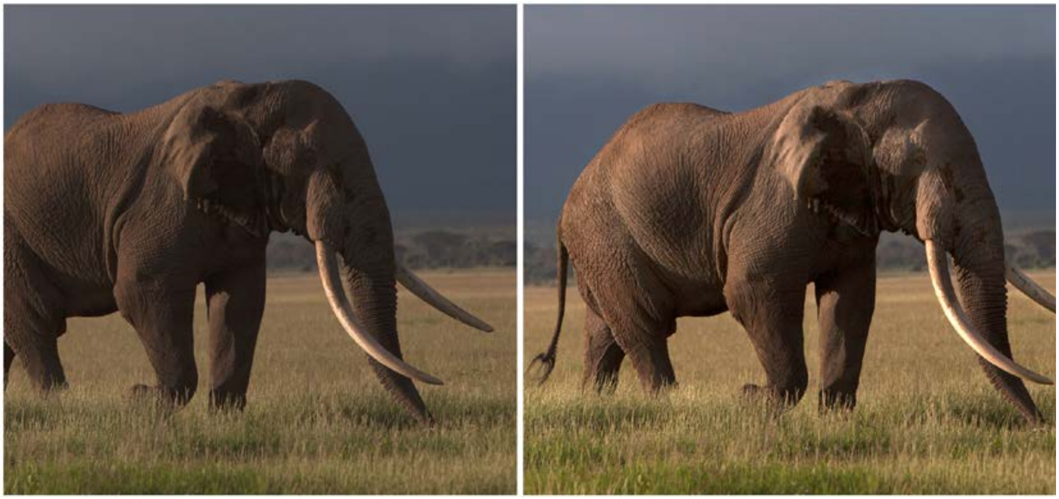
Range: Highlights
Size: 200 px
Exposure: 7%
Brush:

Step two: Then, I use the **Dodge Brush**, set to **Highlights**, to lighten the snow on Mount Kilimanjaro in the distance. For this job, I set **Exposure** to just 7% for the highlights—this sounds like almost nothing, but as the highlights are nearly white anyway, you can't afford to rush the lightening process. Set **Exposure** to a higher number and you'll see the white areas turning 100% white immediately, and once lost, there's no going back. 100% white means the tone is clipped—it's gone forever.



Brush: Default Brushes

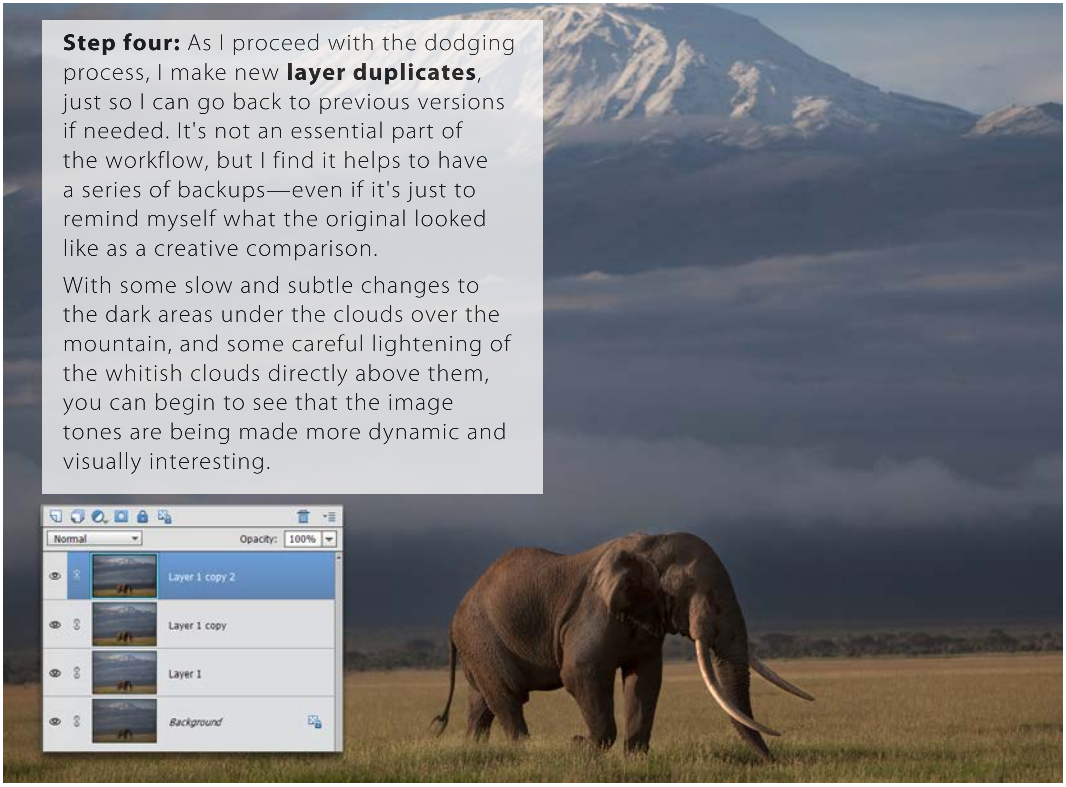
Step three: Be mindful with the **brushes** that you use for the job. And the **opacity** settings. Small, hard-edged brushes are not so useful because they can leave tell-tale marks, as you can see here. Soft-edged brushes work better as they tend to blend the retouching effect into the existing background more convincingly, especially with larger, softer brushes than you think you might need. In this illustration, I have deliberately used a brush that's too small, with an exposure setting that's too high ("exposure" describes the speed of the tool – in this example, how fast it darkens the pixels). No matter how dexterous you might be with such a brush, if you use an **Exposure** setting that's too high, the brush marks always show.

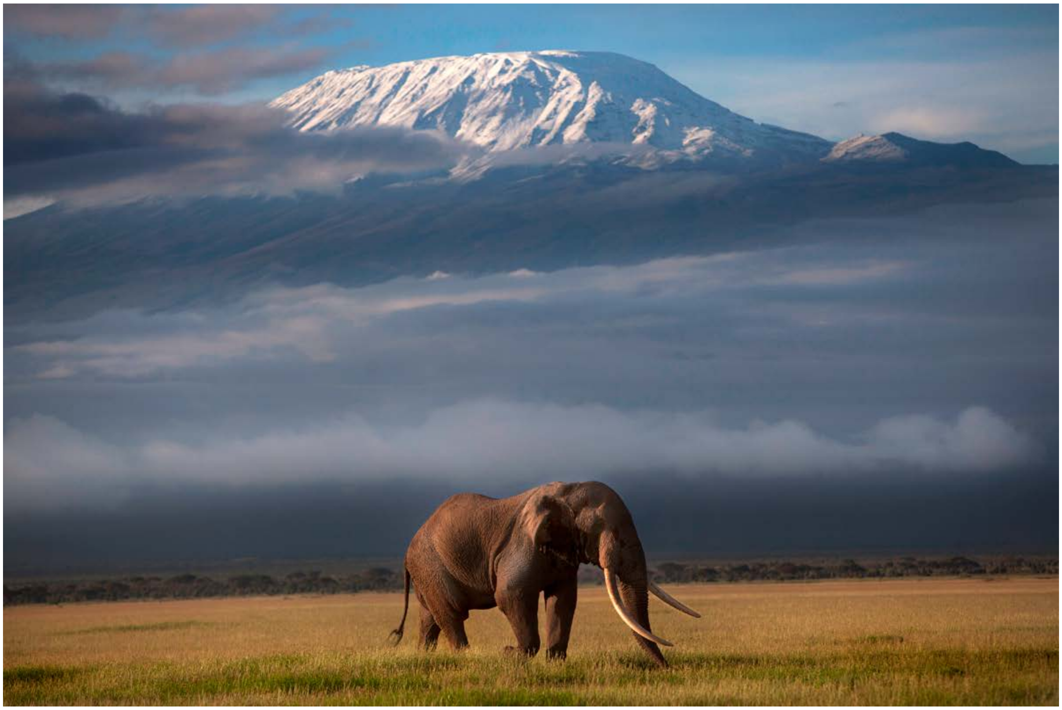


Here's a close-up **comparison** of this old bull elephant, untouched on the left and dodged (carefully) on the right. I will never be able to lighten all the shadows on this subject because of the deep, late-afternoon shadows, but just lightening the already brighter parts of the pachyderm has made a noticeable difference.

Step four: As I proceed with the dodging process, I make new **layer duplicates**, just so I can go back to previous versions if needed. It's not an essential part of the workflow, but I find it helps to have a series of backups—even if it's just to remind myself what the original looked like as a creative comparison.

With some slow and subtle changes to the dark areas under the clouds over the mountain, and some careful lightening of the whitish clouds directly above them, you can begin to see that the image tones are being made more dynamic and visually interesting.





Above: Here's the final dodged and burned version with significantly brightened clouds, warmer colors in the foreground savannah areas, and darker, more brooding clouds in the middle distance—which help to highlight the magnificence of Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain peak, in the far distance.

TIP:

- The **Burn** brush is possibly more useful than the **Dodge** brush tool. It works best when darkening existing tones, especially when set to **Midtones** or **Shadows**. However, it will not add tone to a bright highlight area.

- Burned-in highlights tend to go muddy when you over-burn these areas and are a sure sign that you have gone too far with your burning-in exercise.

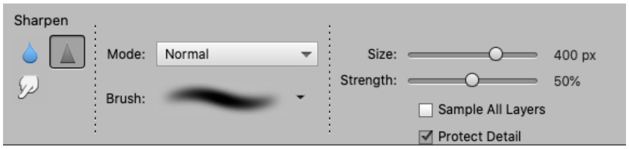
- The **Sponge** Brush tool is used for enhancing or reducing just the color in the image. Colors under the brush tip saturate or desaturate (increase/decrease) depending on the type of brush tip (sharp edged or fuzzy), its size, and importantly, the flow setting. Treat the last setting like a speed control. The higher the number (on a scale between 0 and 100), the faster the effect (but the harder it is to control).

- Although technically a "brush," one thing the **Sponge** Brush tool will not do is add color where there was no color to begin with.

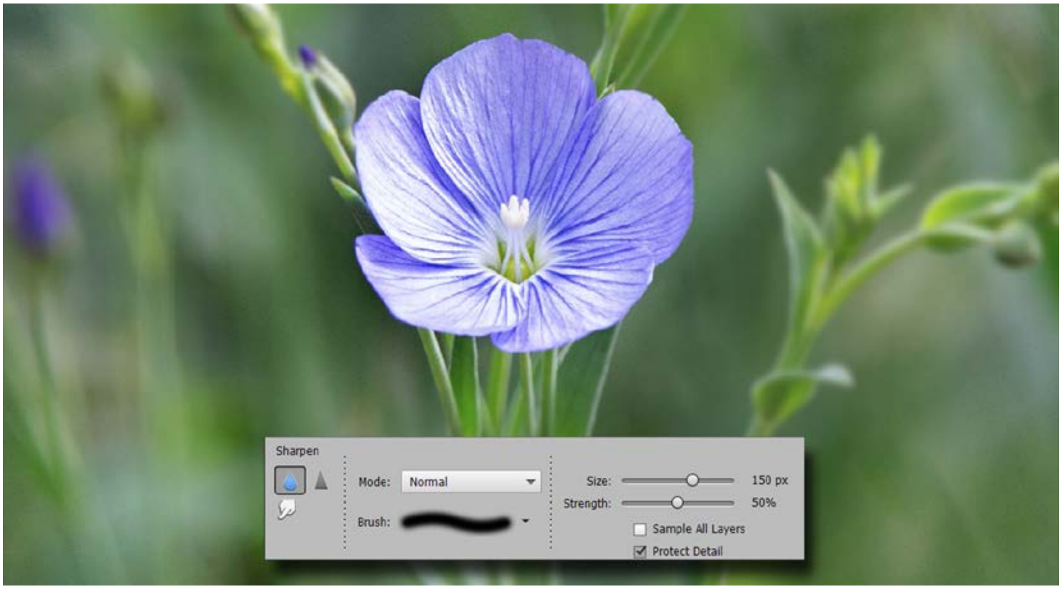
- Although Adobe provides several hundred brush shapes and sizes by default, you can also find more online. I have used brushes downloaded from `www.brusheezy.com` very successfully. (More about this unique process in *Chapter 7, Additional Tools and Features*.)

Blur, Sharpen, and Smudge brushes

So many times, we use global editing tools in our work only to see that it's just a small part of the image that needs attention – not all of it. To this end, Elements sports a few excellent brush-based tools that work on **local adjustments**. You literally "paint" softness or sharpness into small areas of the image with complete control over how quickly the pixels under the brush tip are affected, and how soft the results might be.


Sharpen
Mode: Normal
Brush:
Size: 400 px
Strength: 50%
☐ Sample All Layers
☑ Protect Detail

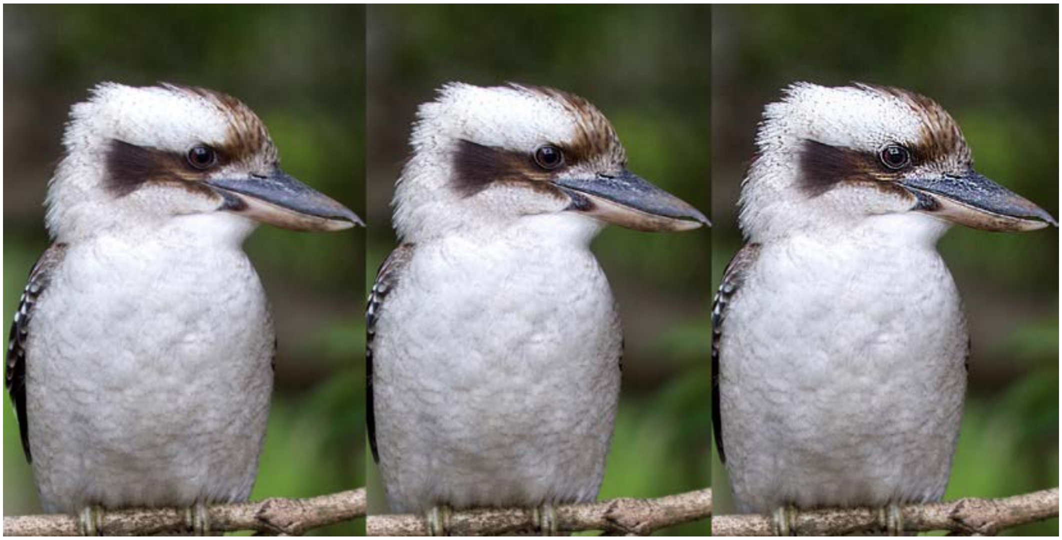
Three such tools are the **Blur**, **Sharpen**, and **Smudge** brushes. All three operate just like all other brush-based tools in that you can adjust the size of the brush (via a slider on the tool Options panel or by pressing the left/right square brackets), its efficiency (here, called **Strength**) and of course, the softness/hardness and shape of the chosen brush tip.


Sharpen
Mode: Normal
Brush:
Size: 150 px
Strength: 50%
☐ Sample All Layers
☑ Protect Detail

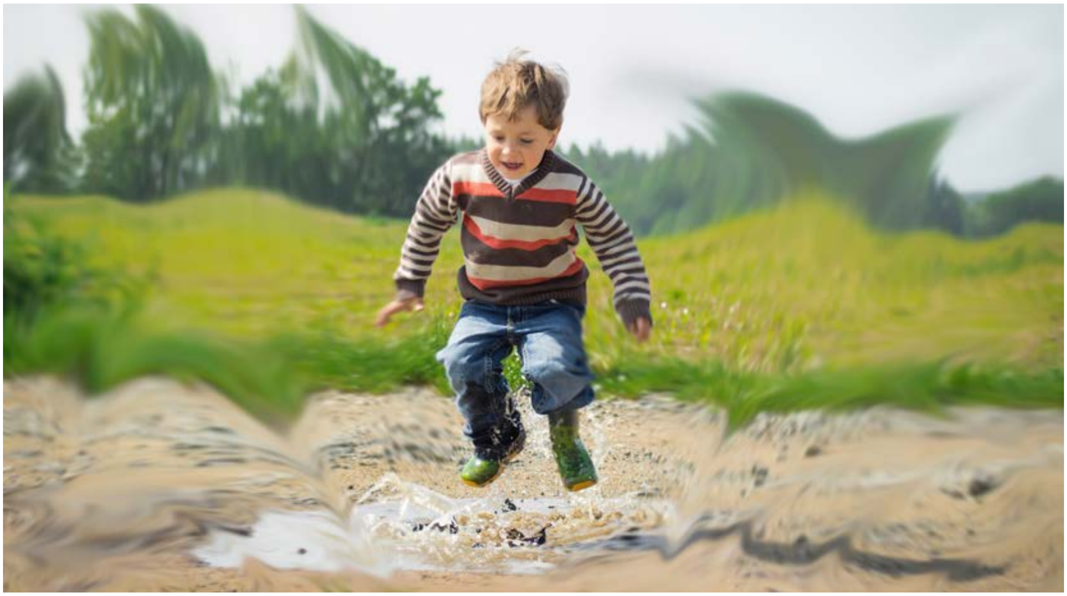
Blurring: I use this brush occasionally as it's good for small details—like the stray shoots around this flower. I couldn't achieve the same depth of field effect using lens apertures, so finished if off in Elements. This tool is easy to use, but it's not suited for softening large areas as it's likely to be very slow.

TIP:

- Don't expect instant results – all three are quite slow in their performance – you have to work at it a bit.
- Duplicate the photo layer so, once you have effected a change, switching that layer **On/Off** will allow you to quickly check if it's working correctly, or not.
- Use the **Strength** slider to make the effect progress quicker.
- Avoid over-use of the **Sharpen** brush as too much can ruin the result.



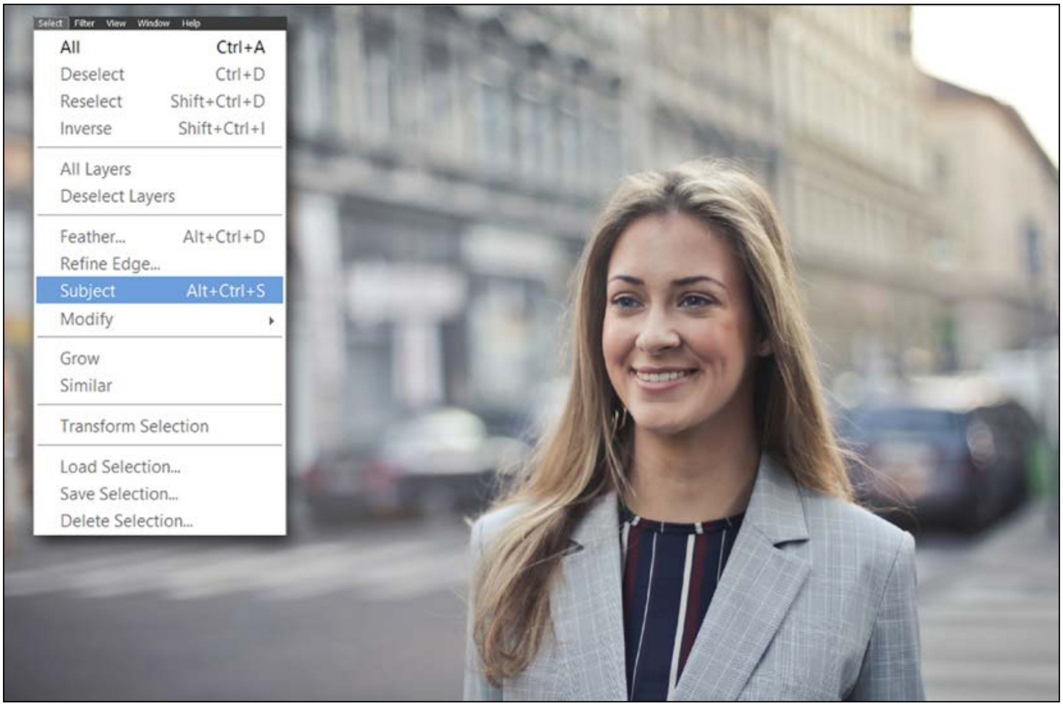
Sharpen Brush: I use the **Sharpen** Brush frequently because it's perfect for adding a dab of clarity into small areas, like the facial features of this kookaburra. The version at centre is the best, the left-hand version is untouched, and the right-hand version has been over-sharpened.



Smudging: This tool is not as useful as the other two mentioned here—unless you really like messing with people's heads. As you can see, the smudging operation is quite destructive, so it's good for wild, crazy creations. However, if I need to create this type of effect, I'd choose the **Liquify** filter because it offers a far greater level of user control (see *Chapter 10, Troubleshooting,* for more on the Liquify filter).

Simple selections: Subject Selection

Here's another newish feature (first seen in Elements 2020). It's called **Subject Selection** and is the simplest and easiest process you could imagine for doing exactly what it claims: selecting a subject. Here's how it works.

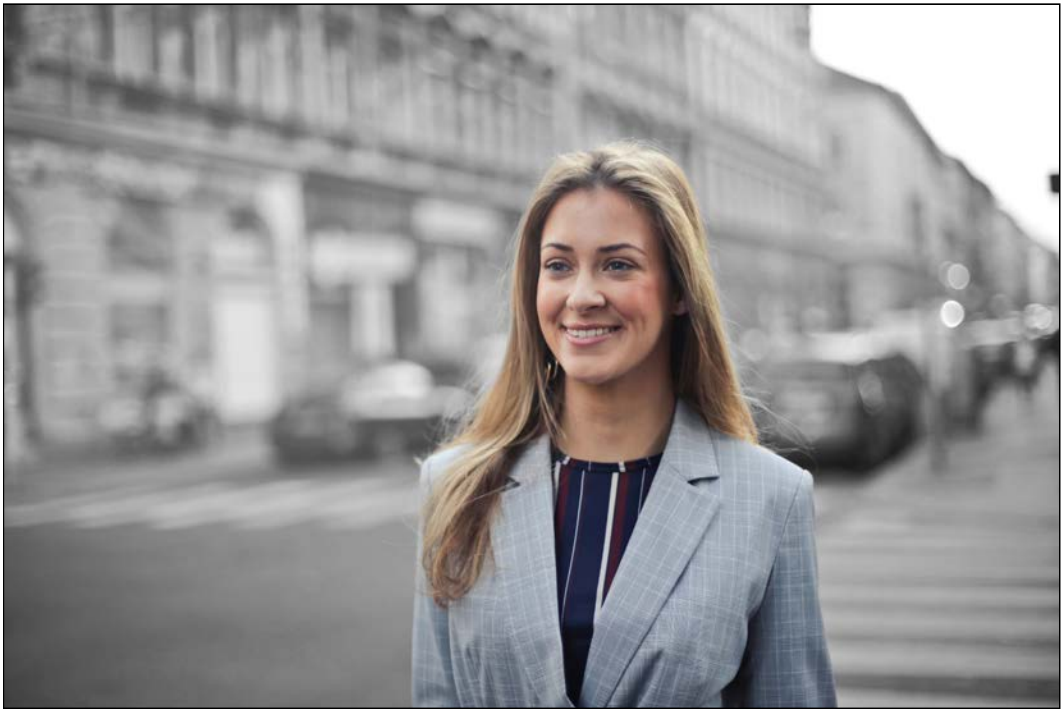

Select
Filter
View
Window
Help
All Ctrl+A
Deselect Ctrl+D
Reselect Shift+Ctrl+D
Inverse Shift+Ctrl+I
All Layers
Deselect Layers
Feather... Alt+Ctrl+D
Refine Edge...
Subject Alt+Ctrl+S
Modify
Grow
Similar
Transform Selection
Load Selection...
Save Selection...
Delete Selection...

Step one: Choose your image, then open it in **Expert** mode. Go to **Select>Subject** (*Alt/Opt+Ctrl/Cmd+ S)* and sit back for five seconds to see the subject selected. Wham! It just happens—driven by Adobe Sensei (***Sensei*** means teacher in Japanese), you'll get a pre-selected subject. I tried this with several picture examples where the subject stood out against the background—this AI-driven feature did the job pretty well—with about a 90-95% accuracy (around the "subject").

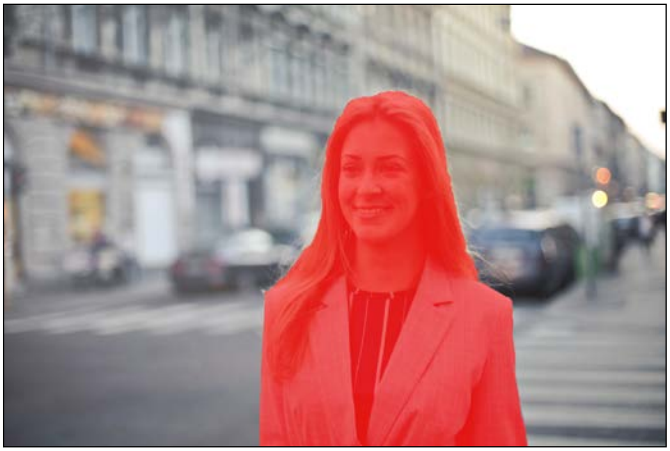
Not bad considering I did nothing to the images other than open the files then try the selection process. Yes, it is a selection tool "dumbed down"—there's no choosing the "right" tool. No tweaking or adjustments needed; it just does it.

Tip:

The **Select>Inverse** command can be incredibly useful because, as luck would have it, often the object you are trying to select is harder to *grab* than the background it's sitting on. If this is the case, it's best to select the background first, then choose **Select>Inverse**, which flips the original selection from the background to the object.



Above: In my example here, I desaturated the background, taking all the colour out of it—it is noticeable, but nevertheless, the result isn't too bad. I constantly get asked if there isn't a quicker way to select an object in Elements and, till this feature came along, there really was no alternative other than using the selection tools mentioned on this page. It all took a bit of time and skill but with the release of this selection feature, the process has become significantly easier—although as with all these AI-driven tools, if the original image is complex, your clean selection rate will drop...



Left: Here's an illustration of how well the selection process did with this shot. It's a tricky one—because of the woman's hair. Hair (and fur) is notoriously hard to select, even if the hair is blonde and the background dark. So, some of the fly-away bits were missed—the solution to this would be to either ignore it or retouch the errant hair out of the picture (quite hard). In fact, depending on what you do with the selection, you might never notice a few strands of hair missing from the selection.

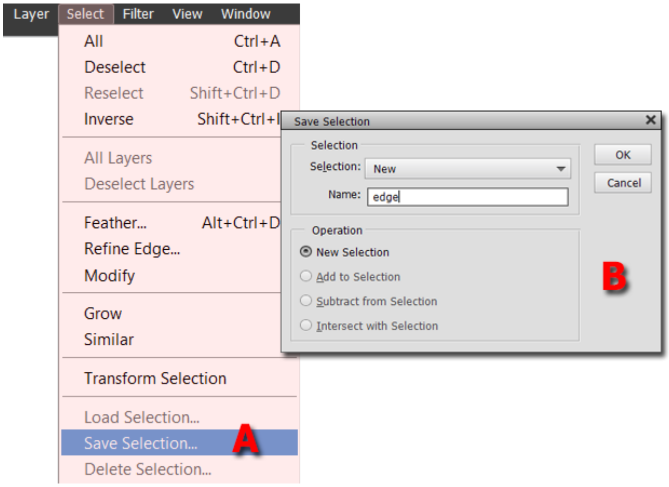
Advanced Selections: Selection Modifiers

Before you even start manually selecting objects, it's vital to understand how to control the selection tools. Unlike the **Subject Selection** feature, which pretty much does all the heavy lifting for you, Elements has a wide range of manually operated selection tools that are designed for those tricky jobs that the AI-driven features can't handle.

Saving a selection

One important feature that you'll find among the selection modifiers is the ability to save a selection once it has been finished, as shown in the following screenshot. For me, this is important because if you've spent time perfecting a selection, you don't want to lose it should you have a problem with the software or the computer, which might require a restart.

Elements has a dedicated selection menu at the top of the screen, and almost at the bottom of that pop-out menu, you'll find the **Save Selection** command (labeled **A** in the screenshot). Give the selection a memorable name in the **Save Selection** panel that opens (labeled **B** in the screenshot) before clicking **OK** and moving on. If you plan on adding multiple selections to the same image file, it's probably worth naming your selections very specifically so they can be easily identified later, should you need to work on them again.


Layer
Select
Filter
View
Window
All Ctrl+A
Deselect Ctrl+D
Reselect Shift+Ctrl+D
Inverse Shift+Ctrl+I
All Layers
Deselect Layers
Feather... Alt+Ctrl+D
Refine Edge...
Modify
Grow
Similar
Transform Selection
Load Selection...
Save Selection...
Delete Selection...
A
Save Selection
OK
Cancel
B

Selection
Selection: New
Name: edge

Operation
● New Selection
○ Add to Selection
○ Subtract from Selection
○ Intersect with Selection

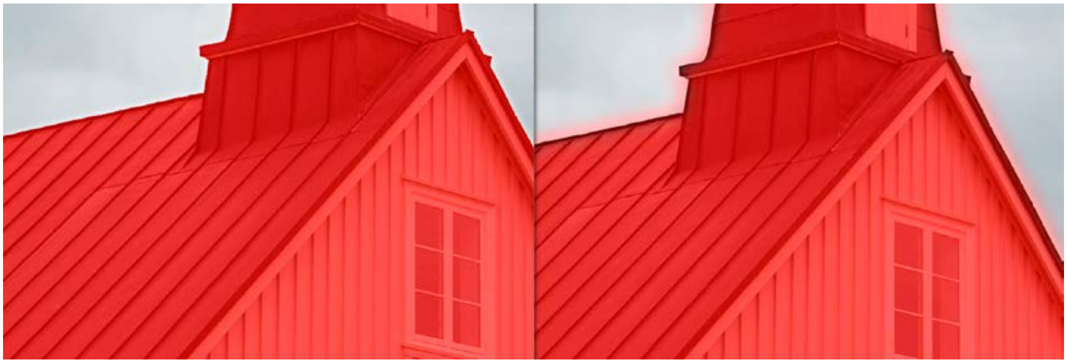
Save Selection is not the end of the story. To save it permanently, you must also save the entire file before moving on. When you do that, you'll notice that Elements forces you to save the file either in the Photoshop (`.psd`) or **Tagged Image File Format** (**TIFF**) file format (`.tif`). The other file formats discussed in this book, notably JPEGs, cannot contain additional information, such as selections, layers, paths, text, vector shapes, or masks.

Once the selection has been saved, you can close the image and move on to a different task. If you need to work on that selection once more, open the image, and, from the **Select** menu, choose **Load Selection**. If there's a single selection saved in that file, you'll see it in the **Load Selection** panel, which means you can click **OK** to open it back into the image. If you have multiple selections, choose the correct one from the **Select** drop-down menu in the **Selection** panel. Remembering to save your selections will save you a heap of time and, more importantly, reduce your frustration levels by not having to recreate a selection from scratch.

Feathering selections

When you make a selection, the selection line around the subject is sharp. It's a little like a scrapbooking exercise where the subject is cut out of the page using a craft knife. We often don't want such a sharp line because your editing will become obvious. The answer is to use a feature called **Feathering**. This blurs the selection edge by a certain amount, dictated by the **pixel radius**. How much "feathering" you need is a hard thing to judge because the fuzziness of the selection line is also influenced by other factors, including file resolution.

Once happy with the modifications that you have added using **Mask view**, click back into **Selection** mode to view the traditional selection line of marching ants (as it's often described) before saving the selection and moving on.

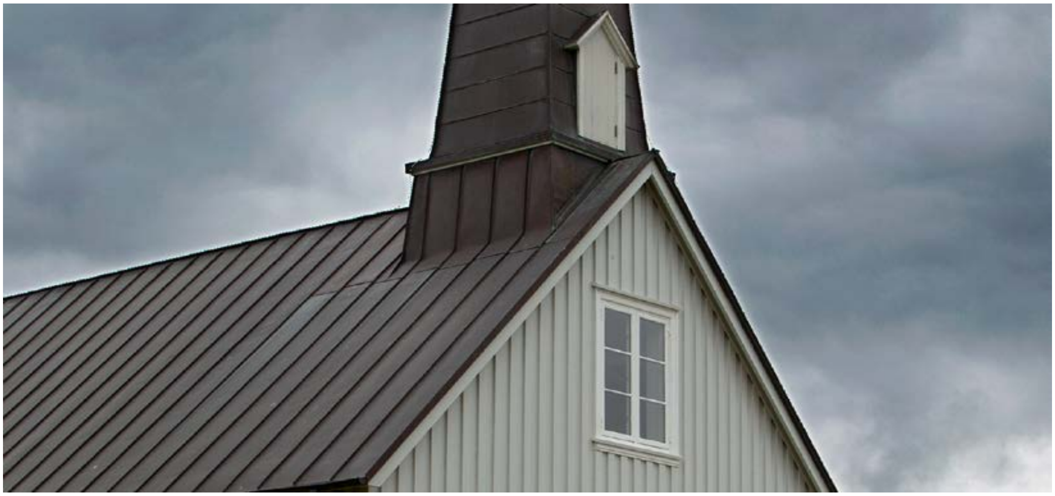


Experience often helps you judge the feathering amount, although it's simple enough to experiment by starting with a 1-pixel radius. If that's not enough, undo the last action and try a different number. In this screenshot, the left-hand image was set to 5 pixels while the fuzzy line in the right-hand image was set to 25 pixels. This is too much because, with such a soft edge, any enhancement added to the sky would bleed into the edge of the building, creating a halo effect.

Tip:

One way to preview feathering is to swap whatever selection tool you are using for **Selection Brush**. This has two modes: **Selection** and **Mask**. The **Selection** mode looks the same as all other selection tools. Its **Mask** mode represents everything that's not been selected as a red mask. This is one of the best ways to display the extent of the current selection, but it also works as a technique for modifying it.

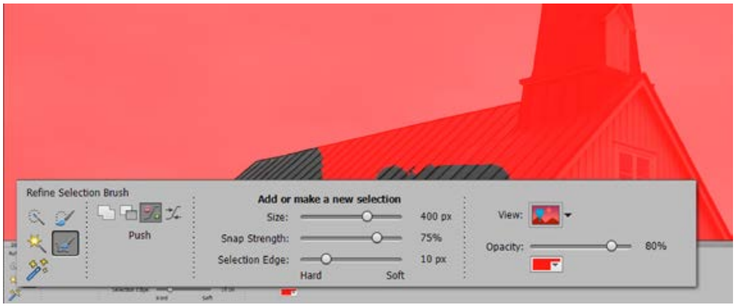
Because this red overlay is, in effect, a mask, you can add to it using the Brush tool, or you can remove from it using the Eraser tool, much in the same way that we can add to, or take from, a Layer Mask using a black or white brush. Once happy with the modifications that you have added in Mask mode, click back into Selection mode to check the accuracy of the selection before saving the selection and moving on.



Too Much Feathering: This is what it looks like if your feathering selection is used too much—once a tone change is applied to the image (in this case, darkening using the **Levels** tool), you'll see a disturbing halo or glow around the selected objects (in this example, it's the roof line). Undo a few steps to just before you applied the feather, apply a smaller feather value, and try again, or use the equally useful **Refine Selection Brush** feature to reduce the feathering amount (below).

The Refine Selection Brush tool

The **Refine Selection Brush** is not technically a selection tool; rather, it's a feature designed to refine an existing selection. In this context, it *sort of* replaces the process of adding/removing from an existing selection by holding the *Shift* or the *Alt/Option* key while moving the cursor over the image.



Refine Selection Brush

Push

Add or make a new selection

Size: 400 px

Snap Strength: 75%

Selection Edge: 10 px

Hard — Soft

View:

Opacity: 80%

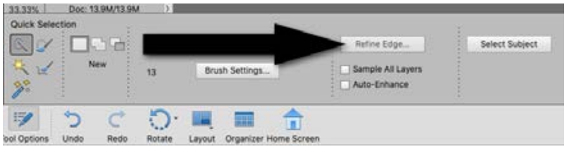
The **Refine Selection Brush** throws up the red mask overlay, in exactly the same manner as the **Selection Brush**, but under its **View** menu, you can also set this tool to display the selection on a black or a white background. If you don't like the red overlay color, click on the color swatches button underneath the **Opacity** slider to change it to a color that suits your mood slightly better.

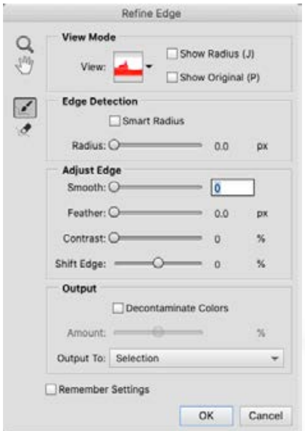
Where the **Refine Selection Brush** out-features the older-style *Shift* or *Alt/Opt* keyboard shortcuts (to add to or take from an existing selection) is that its options not only include the ability to add to or subtract from the selection, but also the ability to push or move the existing lines in the selection. As with most of the other selection tools, you can, of course, change the size of the brush, as well as its softness, in order to give you greater control.

The Refine Edge tool

Another useful selection feature is called the **Refine Edge** tool.

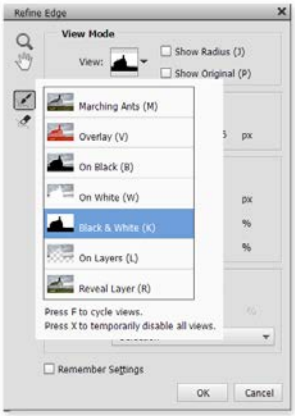
Having made your initial selection, if you click the **Refine Edge** button in the **Options** panel, you'll see the selection view mode change to a white background. You can change this to a red mask background, a black background, or several other working *looks*, depending on how complex the picture is and how you like to view your selection work (as we'll soon see).


33.33%
Doc: 13.9M/13.9M
Quick Selection
New
13
Brush Settings...
Refine Edge...
Sample All Layers
Auto-Enhance
Select Subject
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Layout
Organizer
Home Screen


Refine Edge
View Mode
View:
Show Radius (J)
Show Original (P)
Edge Detection
Smart Radius
Adjust Edge
Output
Decontaminate Colors
Amount:
Remember Settings
OK
Cancel

Radius: 0.0 px
Smooth: 0
Feather: 0.0 px
Contrast: 0 %
Shift Edge: 0 %
Output To: Selection

Refine Edge panel (on the left): To use this panel effectively, move the sliders to see if it makes the selection around your subject more or less accurate, as shown in the screenshot. Note that this is another easy way to view the effectiveness of feathering. Once this is done, click **OK**, and output the selection. Choices for output locations include **Selection**, **Layer Mask**, **New Layer**, **New Layer with Mask**, **New Document**, and a **New Document with Layer Mask**.


Refine Edge
View Mode
View:
Show Radius (J)
Show Original (P)
Marching Ants (M)
Overlay (V)
On Black (B)
On White (W)
Black & White (K)
On Layers (L)
Reveal Layer (R)
Press F to cycle views.
Press X to temporarily disable all views.
Remember Settings
OK
Cancel

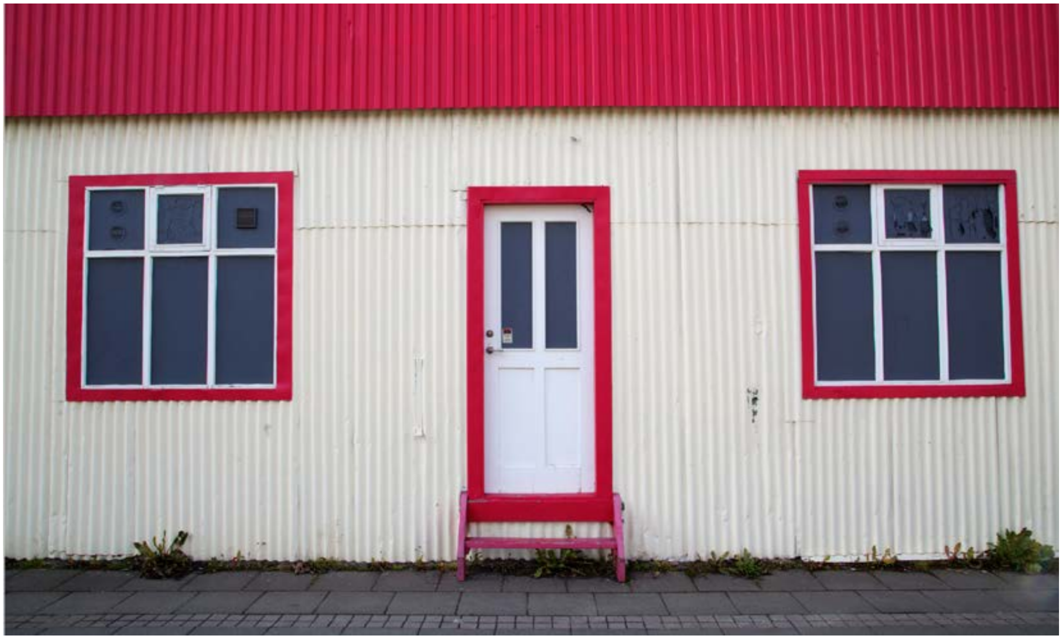
Refine Edge mask (above): How you view the selection being refined is controlled using the **View Mode** drop-down menu—this offers several different ways to see what you are doing to the selection—the mode above is simply set to black and white. Others view modes on offer include **On White**, (red) **Overlay**, **On Layers**, and the traditional "marching ants" selection line.

Advanced selections: the Marquee and Lasso tools

The **Marquee** Tool has two modes: **Rectilinear** and **Elliptical**—with these you can draw a square, rectangle, ellipse, or circular selection shape. In this exercise, I want to shift the door in the following image to the right, copy and paste the left-hand window over the space left by the [moved] door frame, and finally copy and paste an object from another image into the left-hand corner of this scene.

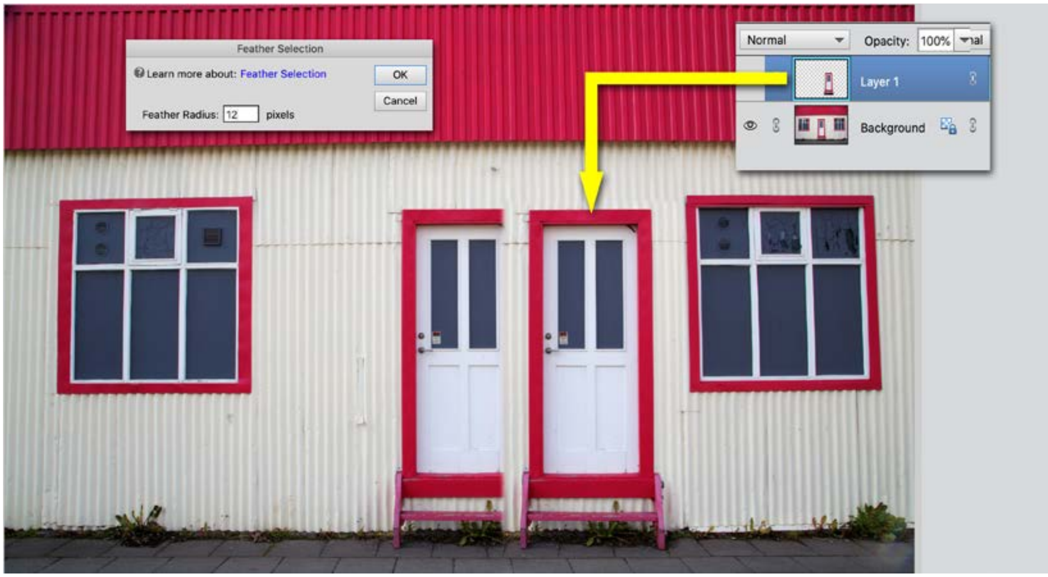
When making selections, it's important to appreciate that all selection tools work together—you can start with one, then if needed work with a second or third selection tool to complete the job.

Possibly the hardest task with selections is to determine which one is best for the job—here I started with the **Rectangular Marquee Tool** to make a selection of this house's front door:



Step one: The door is roughly rectangular, so the **Rectangular Marquee** tool is probably the best choice to start with. Because it's not 100% vertical—and there's also the pink steps at the front—I dragged the marquee loosely around the edge of the door.

Step two: Because I've selected quite a bit more than just the door and steps, I chose to add a **Feather** amount to the selection line. This feature (**Select>Feather**) effectively fuzzes out the normally sharp selection edge so that it can blend more discretely with whatever it is pasted over. The trick is to judge how much feathering, measured in pixels, the selection needs. With a 60 Mp RGB file, I'd add anything between 8 and 20 pixels—if the number you add proves to be too soft (or not soft enough), simply undo the last action (*Ctrl/Cmd + Z*) and try another pixel amount.

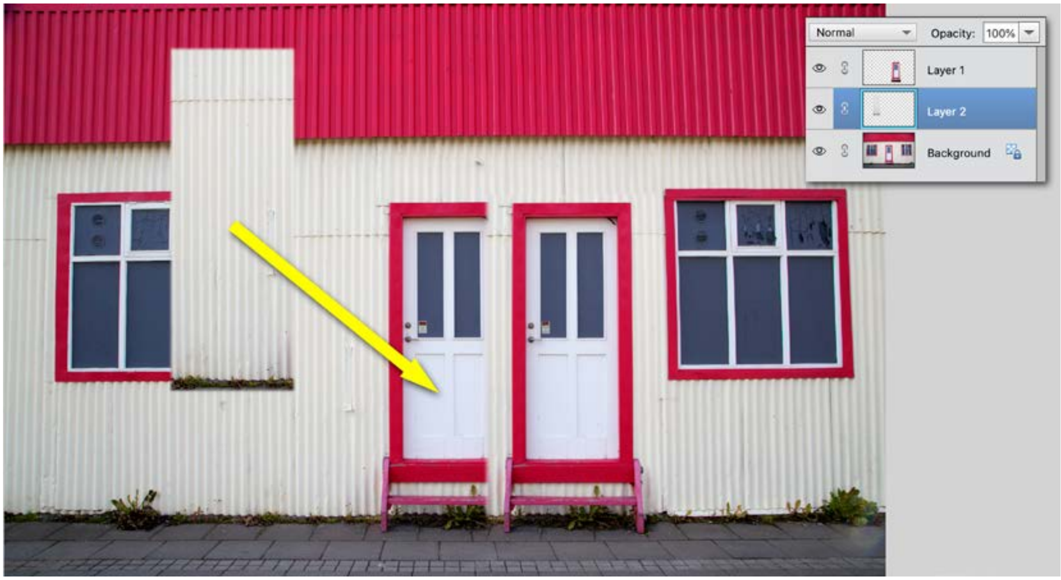


Feather Selection

Feather Radius: 12 pixels

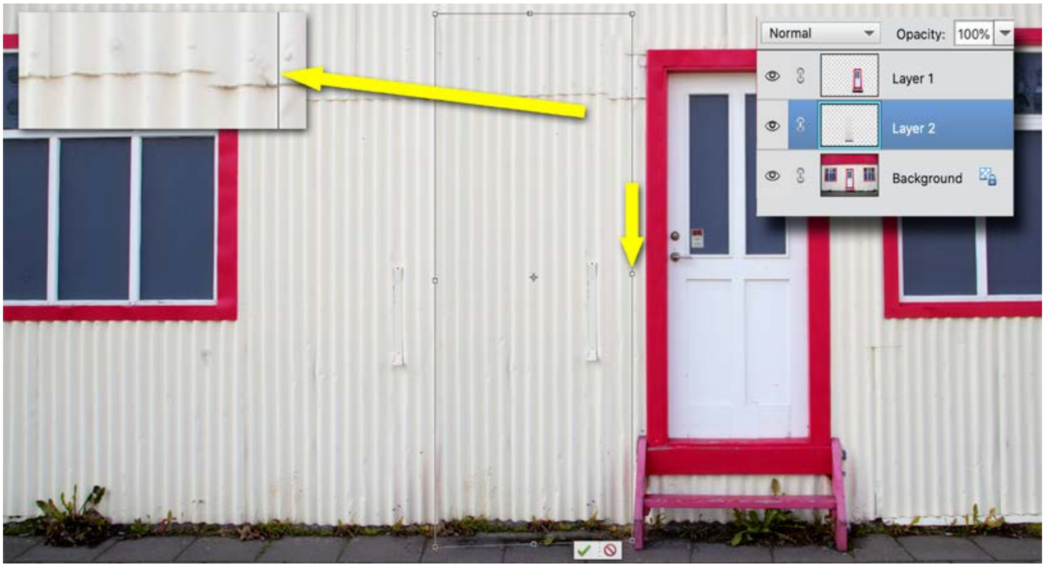
Normal Opacity: 100%

Step three: I added a feather amount of 12 pixels (inset panel, left). As you can see in the **Layer** panel, top right, I have copied and pasted (*Ctrl/Cmd + C* then *Ctrl/Cmd + V*) the contents of the selection back into the same document. Because it lands onto its own (new) layer, it is independent of the background and, using the **Move Tool** (*V*), can be click-shifted to the right, to a new location.

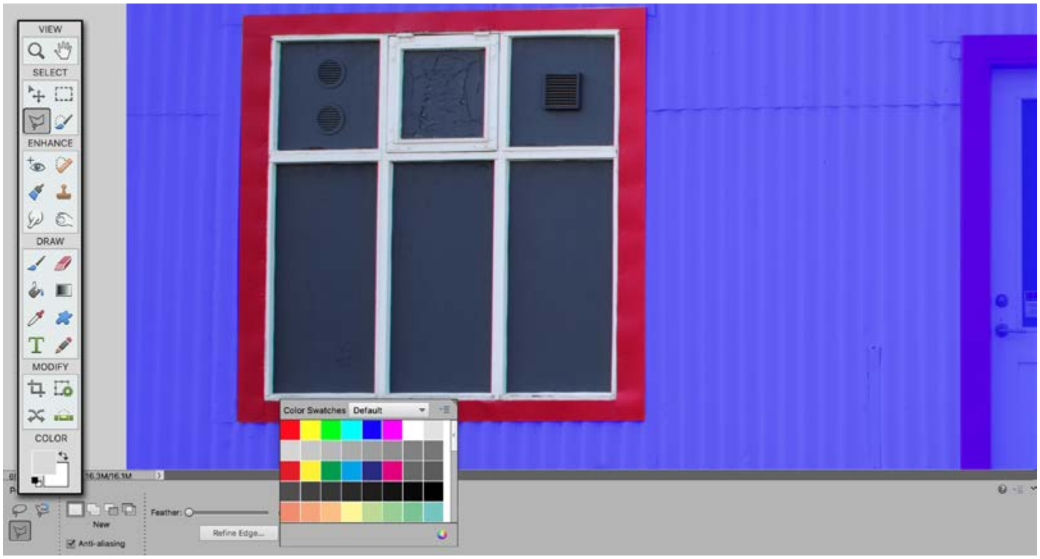


Normal Opacity: 100%

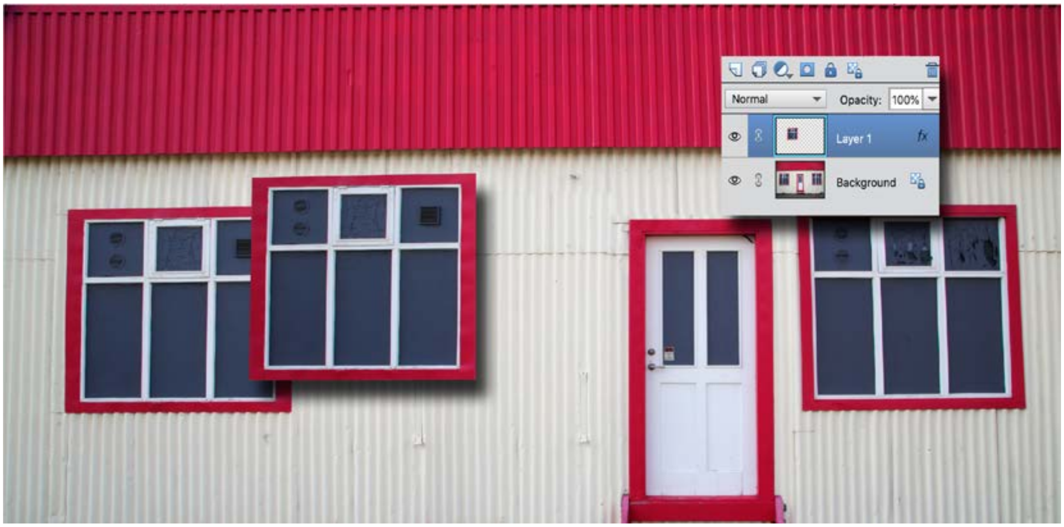
Step four: Once the door has been re-located, there's another obvious visual problem: we can still see the original door. So, another rectangular selection was made over the metal wall—I used the same feather amount, which you can clearly see in the fuzzy edges. It too was copied and pasted back into the same image, then shifted under the pasted door layer to conceal the remains of the original door. Job done.


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 1
Layer 2
Background

Step five: With the steel sheeting covering the original door, I noticed that the vertical corrugations didn't line up (left inset, arrowed). I used the **Transform** function (**Image>Transform>Skew**), which displays a bounding box around the object. By pulling the central right-hand edge **handle** down slightly (short arrow) I could make the pasted wall line up better.

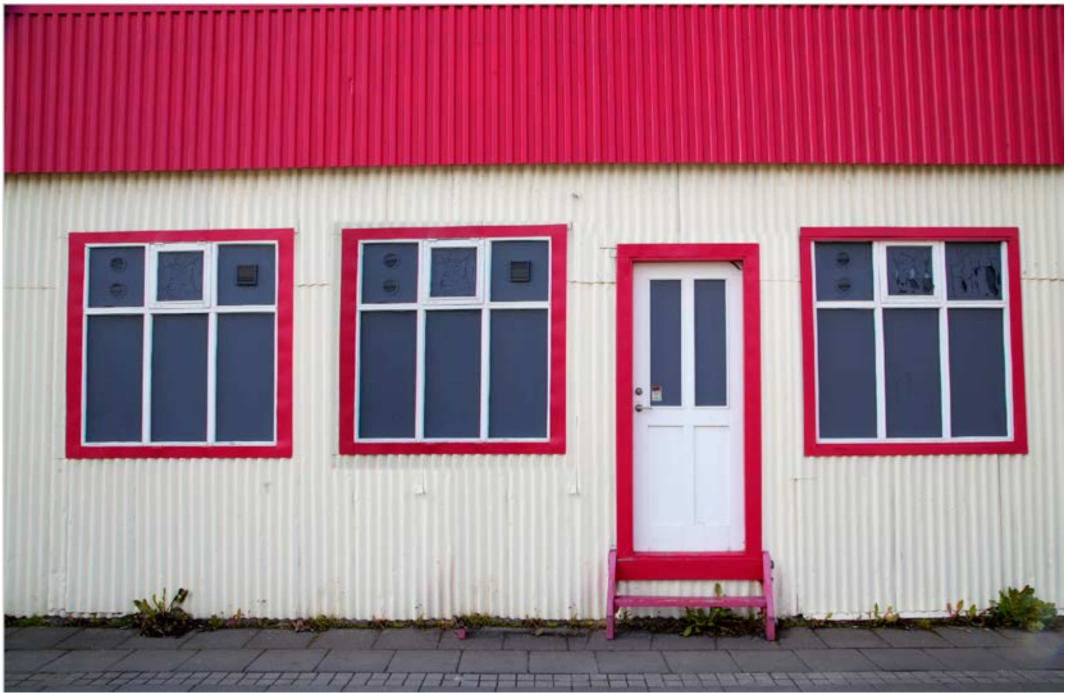

VIEW
SELECT
ENHANCE
DRAW
MODIFY
COLOR
Color Swatches
Default
Feather:
New
Anti-aliasing
Refine Edge...

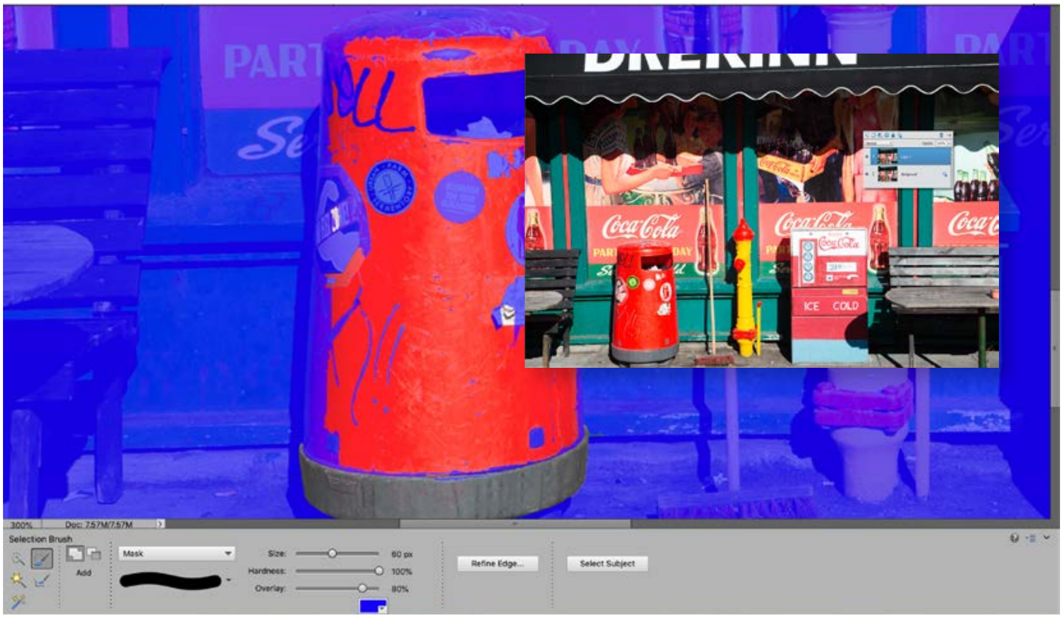
Step six: Selecting the left window frame was a little trickier. I used the **Polygonal Lasso** Tool - perfect for this not quite rectangular shape. Click in a corner, then move to the next corner, click and repeat. Five clicks and I had the window selected. Here I've changed from the **Lasso** Tool to **Selection Brush's Mask View** (in blue) as it's a great visual feature to check the accuracy of the selection. You can also edit this mask directly to modify the selection shape by brushing in, or out, more or less detail.



Step seven: With the window frame now accurately selected, it's a simple matter of copying and pasting it back into the same image—as I did with the door and the sheet metal section. Because I used the **Polygonal Lasso Tool**, the selection was quite tight around the object so I thought that no feathering was needed.

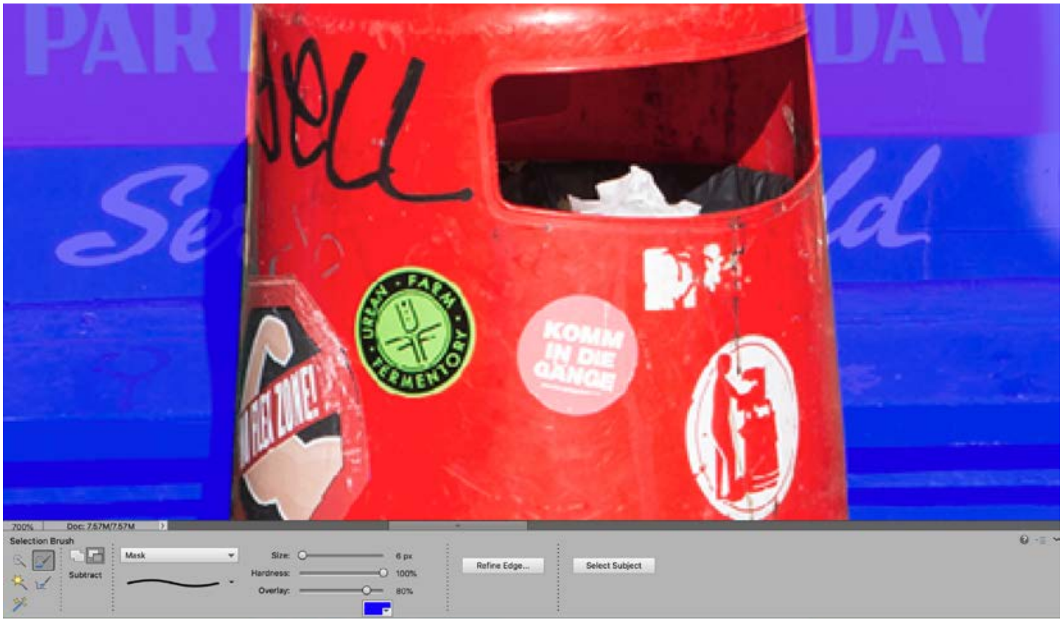
As it panned out, the window pasted perfectly into the frame (below).



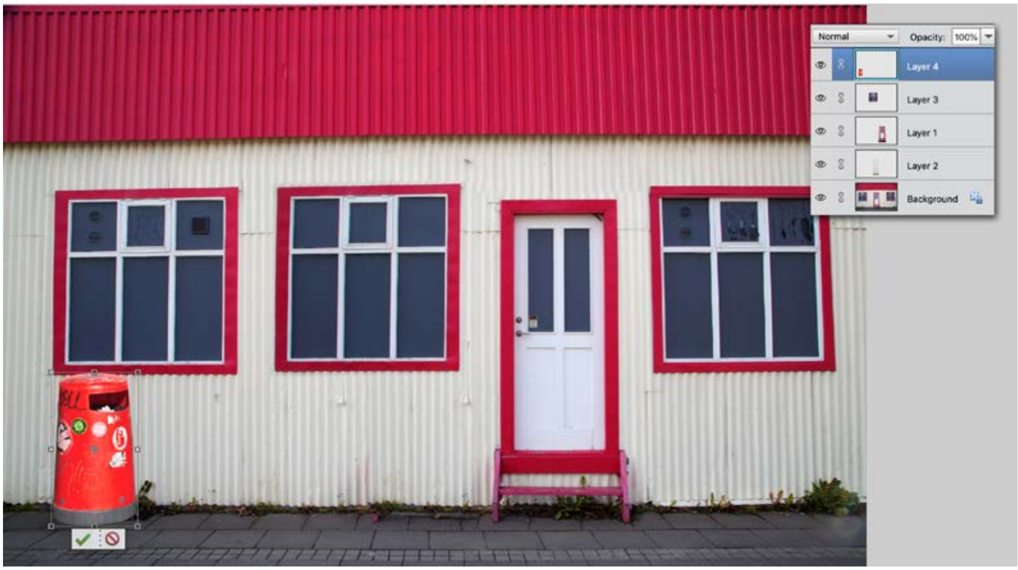

Selection Brush
Refine Edge...
Select Subject

300%
Doc: 7.57M/7.57M
Mask
Add
Size: 60 px
Hardness: 100%
Overlay: 80%

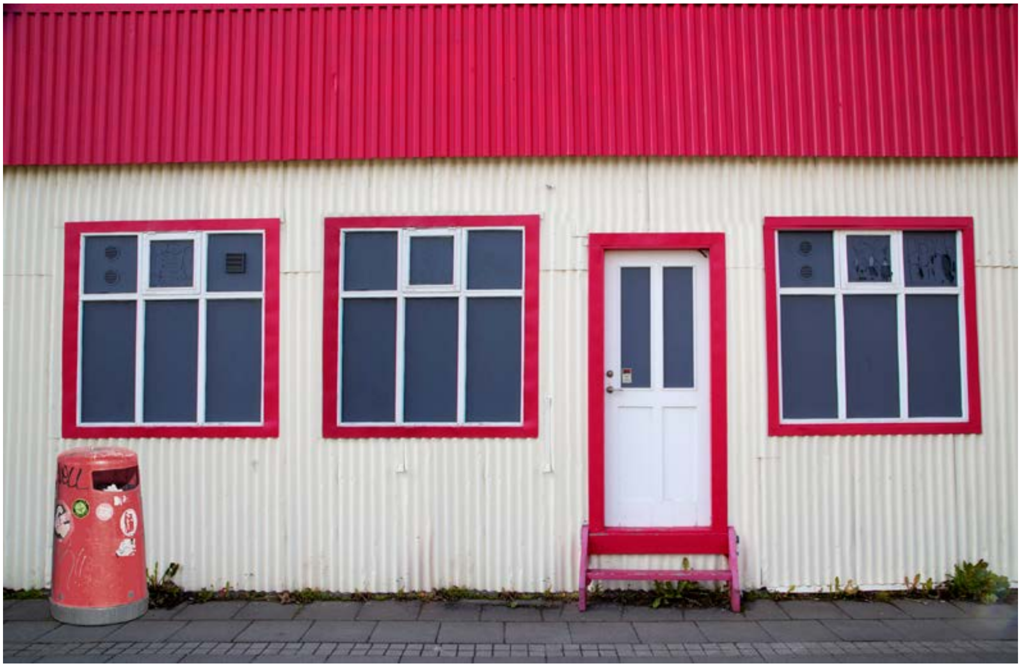
Step eight: Now for something a bit more complex: to copy and paste an object from a different image into my tin shed picture. With this shopfront image open, I initially used the **Magic Wand Tool** to select the red waste bin. It's red, but it's also covered with stickers and graffiti, so was hard to select "cleanly." Changing to **Selection Brush** and its **Mask View** mode (here set to blue), I proceeded to "clean up" the bits of the waste bin not already selected. In this clear-to-see view mode, it's a relatively easy task (see below).


Selection Brush
Refine Edge...
Select Subject

700%
Doc: 7.57M/7.57M
Mask
Subtract
Size: 6 px
Hardness: 100%
Overlay: 80%

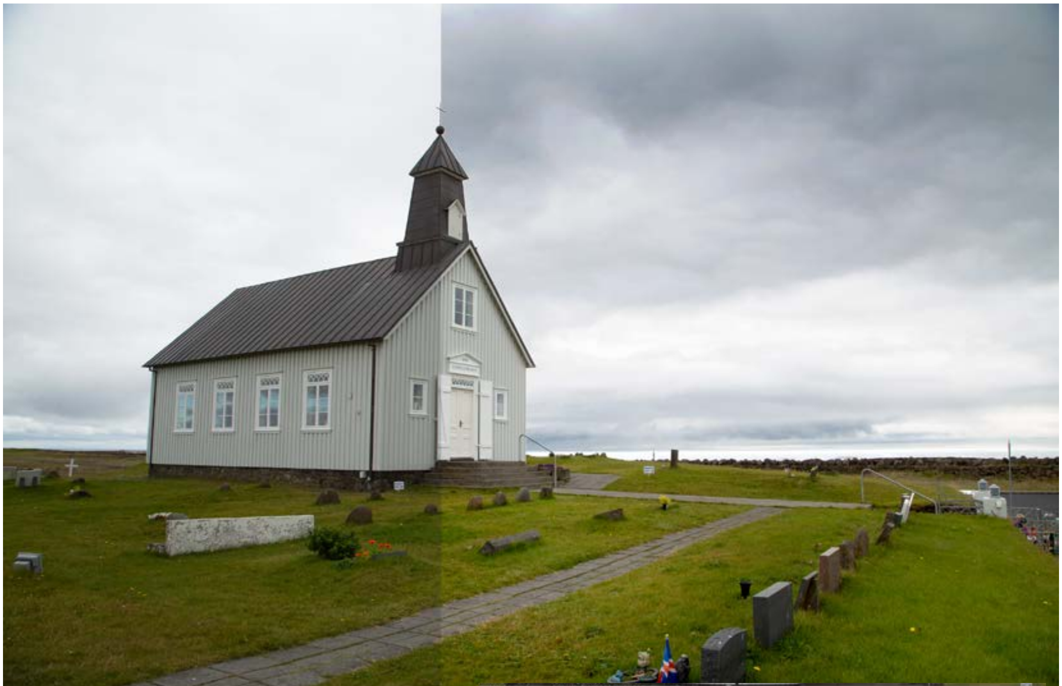


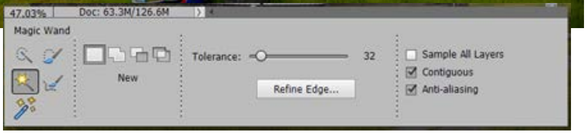
Step nine: Once the selected bin has been copied, I switched to the tin shed picture and pasted it into the file**.** Once again, I used the **Transform Tool** to change its size to fit the scene. Then using the **Hue/Saturation** and **Levels** tools to make the object, taken from a different image, appear to have the same color, contrast and brightness values as the host. The final image (below) had one final tweak added to it—I used the **Spot Healing Brush** to cover up/remove the vents in the newly copied window to make it look different to the original.



Advanced selections: the Magic Wand tool

The **Magic Wand** tool is one of the best selection tools because it selects objects based on their tones; plus, it's so easy to use. If I use the example on an image featuring a blue sky and a dark landscape, clicking on the blue sky with the **Magic Wand** tool will inevitably select everything that is blue, but if the sky fades from dark blue to light blue, as most skies do, you might find that **Magic Wand** only selects a band of color, not the entire sky. This is because the pixels that you click on represent a certain shade of blue. The tool will not automatically select every pixel that's blue. Its **sensitivity** (to the range of blues, in this example) is controlled by the **Tolerance** slider. The default value for this is `32`, so if I were to increase the tolerance value to, say, `100`, it would grab a lot more of the sky. If you set it to the maximum value, `255`, the tool will select everything in the image, regardless of its color.





Tolerance: 32

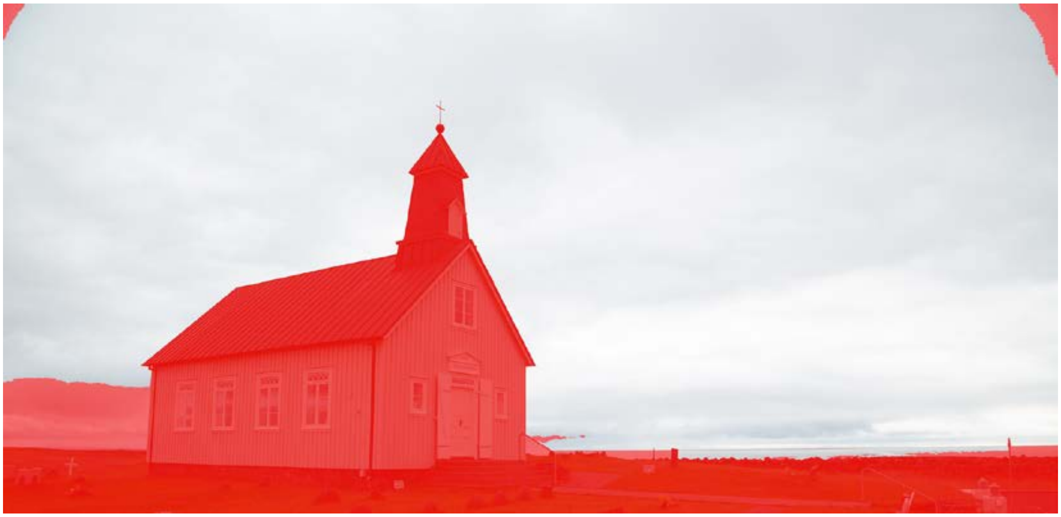
☐ Sample All Layers

☑ Contiguous

☑ Anti-aliasing

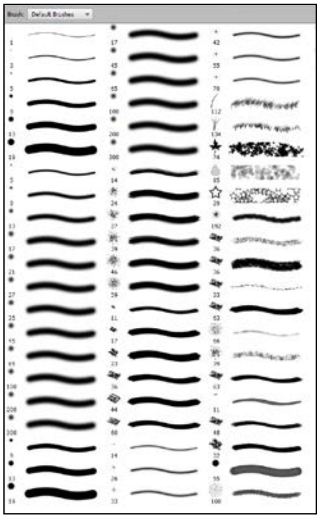
In this before and after example, I started with a regular snap that had a rather bleak, white sky—by selecting just the sky and adding several tone changes to it using **Levels**, I was able to make it appear far more dramatic, with darker clouds, and by inverting the selection, I added more color saturation to the church and cemetery out front.

Step one: Choose the **Magic Wand** tool, check that its default is set to `32` in the **Tool Options** panel, and click once on the sky.



Step two: Here's how much **Magic Wand** selected in this image with one click—almost all the sky. By changing from **Magic Wand** to **Selection Brush**, then switching from **Selection** to its **Mask** mode, you'll instantly see what has been selected (the clear areas) and what has not been selected (the red mask areas).

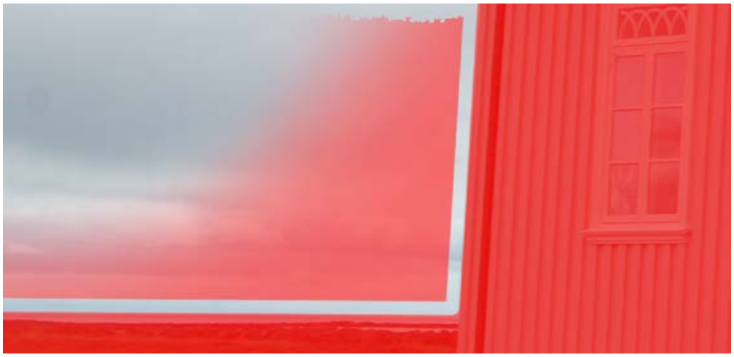
Interestingly, the two small red areas in the top left and top right indicate that not all the sky has been selected—this is normal and easy to fix. In this example, the reason it is a slightly different tone from the rest of the sky (and therefore needs more attention when selecting) is that it has natural fall-off (that is, it has slight edge darkening), which is typically produced when using a wide-angle lens. The fall-off can be very subtle and hard to detect with the naked eye, but because it might only be a tiny bit darker, the selection process can still pick it out as being different.



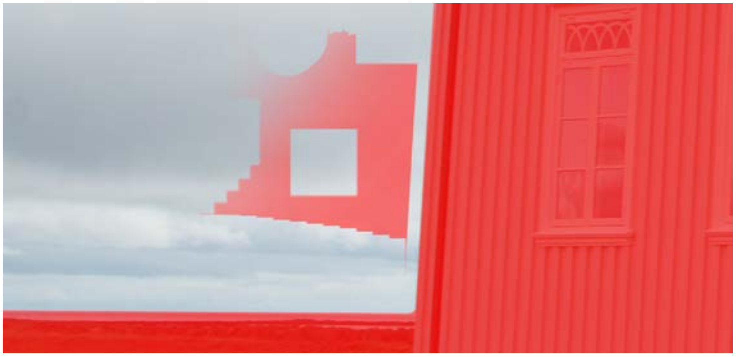
(Left) Here's a glimpse of Photoshop Elements' vast brush repository. What you see here is just what is labeled the **Default** brushes. There are a dozen more categories, including **Square** brushes, **Dry Media** brushes, and **Calligraphic** brushes. You can also download and install other people's brushes off the internet if you feel they have more to offer than the vast range seen here! Elements has more than 250 brush shapes and thicknesses.

Step three: While in this red mask mode, choose a suitably sized brush and use the **Eraser** tool to remove the easy bits of the mask first (that is, the top-left and top-right sections of the screen).

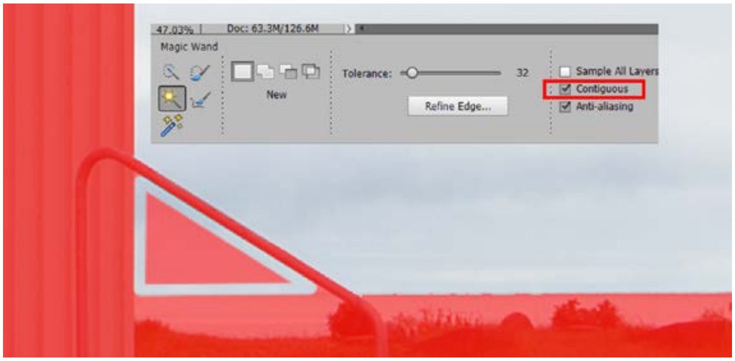
Productivity tip #1: To draw, retouch, paint, or erase in a straight line, click at the start of your line, hold the ***Shift*** key down, move the cursor to the end of the (imaginary) line, and click a second time. The **Eraser** tool draws a straight line between click A and click B. Keep holding the ***Shift*** key and click again. The straight erase line joins click B with click C, and so on. This works with all drawing, painting, retouching, and erasing tools. If the features you are erasing around are linear, consider using a ***square-shaped*** brush tip. There's an entire sub-menu for square brushes (and many other types of brush tip).



Productivity tip #2: Use the keyboard shortcuts *Ctrl/Cmd* + + and *Ctrl/Cmd* +—to zoom in and out when erasing or retouching fine details (such as the sky under the church handrail). It's a lot faster than mousing over to the **Zoom** tool each time you want to enlarge something.



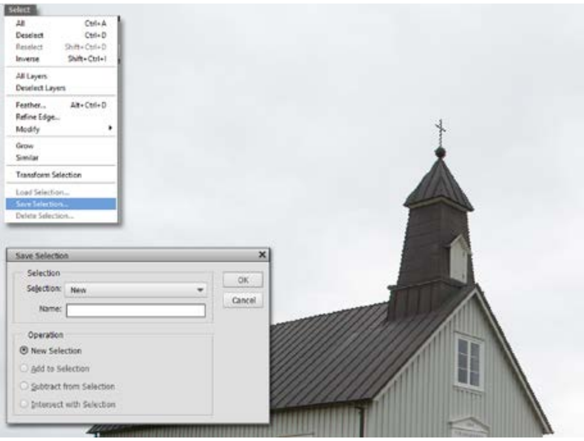
Productivity tip #3: As you can see here, the point-to-point technique works well in tricky-to-select areas such as this. Note that the **Magic Wand** selection tool comes with a **Contiguous** checkbox (panel inset). If checked, the wand will only select pixels of a similar color if they are touching each other. Uncheck the **Contiguous** box and it will select all the pixels that match that initial click. This can get you into a bit of (selection) trouble, so I suggest starting with **Contiguous** checked.



Tolerance: 32
☐ Sample All Layers
☑ Contiguous
☑ Anti-aliasing

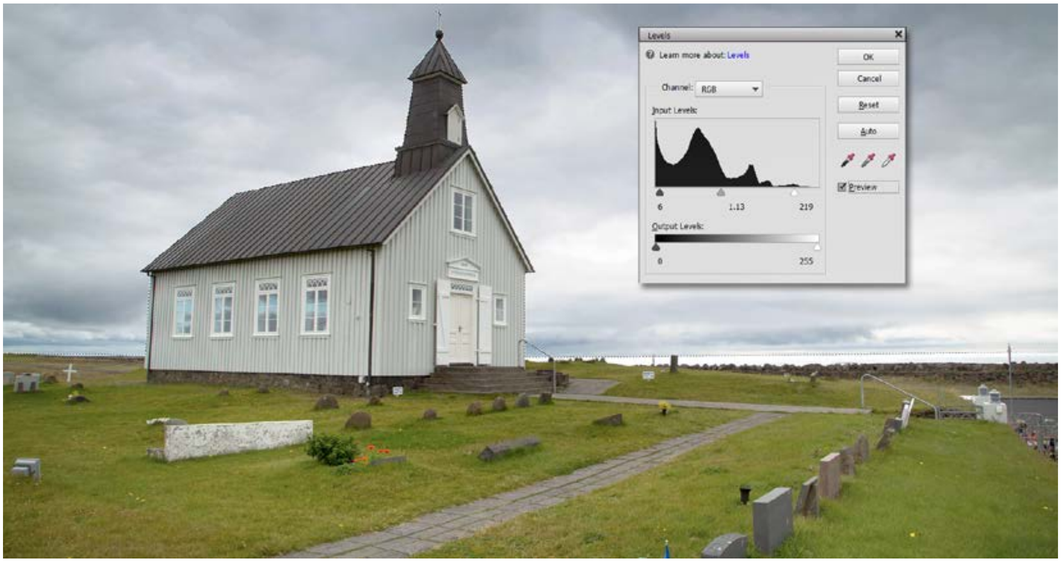
If, at the default of 32, it only grabs some of the sky, you can switch the tool into its **Add** mode, then click on a part of the sky it has not so far selected, and this is added to the original selection. To finish, keep holding the *Shift* key and click every missing part of the sky till it's completely selected.

My choice in this example is to start with the sky, because it's easier to select. Once that's selected and saved, choose **Select>Inverse**, and the selection will flip into negative mode—so that you now have the grass and church selected but not the sky. It can be very handy in all those situations where selecting the subject is harder than selecting the background.


Select
All Ctrl+A
Deselect Ctrl+D
Reselect Shift+Ctrl+D
Inverse Shift+Ctrl+I
All Layers
Deselect Layers
Feather... Alt+Ctrl+D
Refine Edge...
Modify
Grow
Similar
Transform Selection
Load Selection...
Save Selection...
Delete Selection...
Save Selection
OK
Cancel

Selection
Selection: New
Name:
Operation
● New Selection
○ Add to Selection
○ Subtract from Selection
○ Intersect with Selection

Step four: With all the red mask areas erased out of the sky (and some red mask areas added or extended across the ocean using the **Brush** tool), the next important step is to save the selection. Go to **Select>Save Selection** and then save the file in `.psd` format to retain the selection, just in case it's needed later.

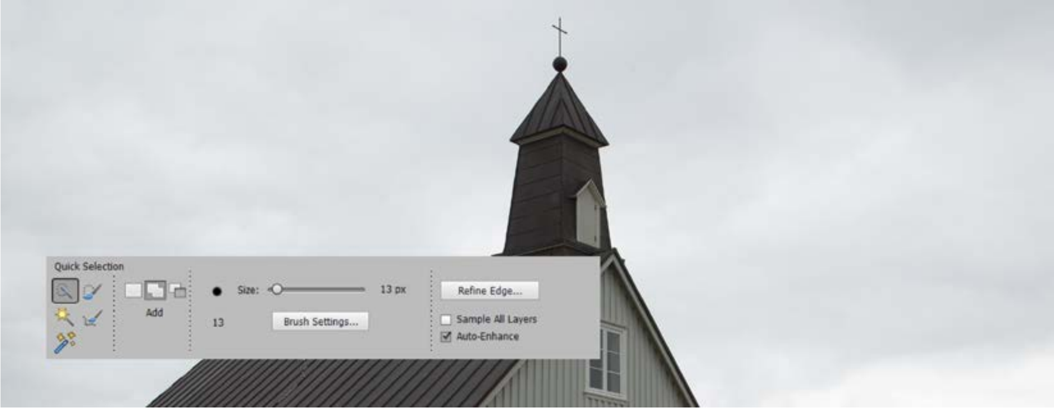

Levels
Learn more about: Levels
OK
Cancel
Reset
Auto

Channel: RGB
Input Levels: 6 1.13 219
Output Levels: 0 255
☑ Preview

Final Steps: Once your selection is nice and clean, it's time to make some adjustments to those selected tones in the image. Here I used the **Levels** tool to add contrast—and therefore a bit more visual drama - into the original pale-looking sky. I wanted to make the lower part of the scene more colorful so used the **Select>Inverse** command to reverse the selection so that it was the church and green areas that were selected, not the sky. This enabled me to add some color using the **Hue/Saturation** tool.

The Quick Selection tool

The **Quick Selection** tool certainly has a more instant appeal about it. Click and drag the cursor through the area that you want selected; it operates just like the **Magic Wand** tool, based on pixel color, while continually expanding its semi-automated selection process as you drag the cursor over different colored pixels. Because of its design, you'll note that this selection tool is very good at *snapping* to the edges of same-colored objects.

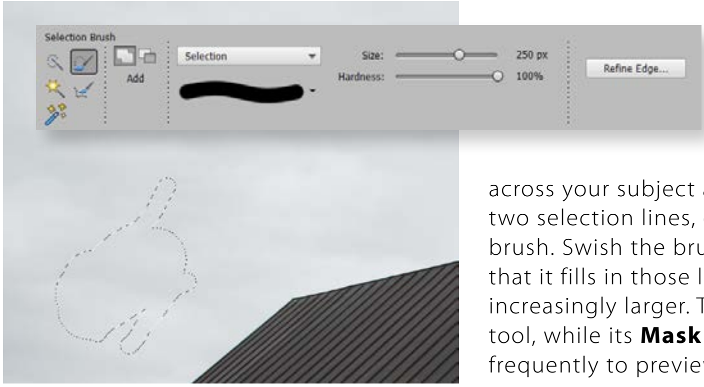


Size: 13 px
☐ Sample All Layers
☑ Auto-Enhance

Note that the **Magic Wand** tool might also be fairly effective with this kind of selection subject, but it would probably need lots of additional mouse-clicking to scoop up all the tone variants, including shade, shadow, and other tonal inconsistencies that every picture throws at us. In this example, it's the shading in the clouds that's hard to assess—those tones are hard to see with the naked eye, but nevertheless will appear a challenge to select evenly using a tool such as **Magic Wand**.

The Selection Brush tool

Photoshop Elements ships with a range of selection tools, all of which offer slightly different selection capabilities. Here's a neat one called, simply, **Selection Brush**!

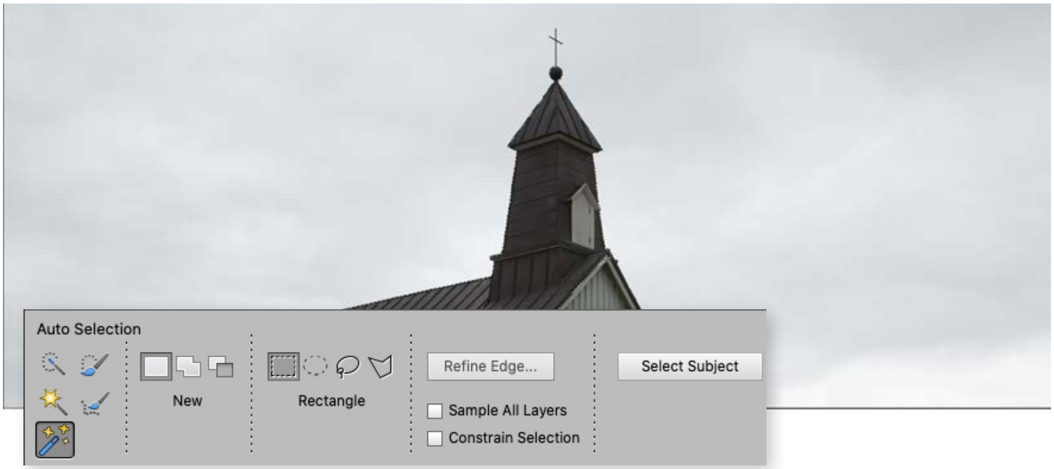


Selection
Size: 250 px
Hardness: 100%

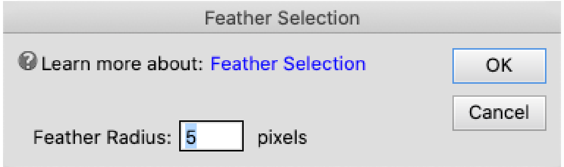
This tool features the excellent **Selection** and **Mask Viewing** modes. It operates just like a paint brush. Click and drag across your subject and it will appear to draw two selection lines, one on each side of the brush. Swish the brush tip around and you'll see that it fills in those lines, making the selection increasingly larger. This is a reasonably capable tool, while its **Mask** mode is a feature I use frequently to preview and edit work done.

The Auto Selection tool

As with **Refine Edge Brush**, the **Auto Selection** tool is relatively new to Photoshop Elements. It combines the action of the regular **Lasso** tools with the **Auto Selection** functionality of **Quick Selection Brush**. What this means in practical terms is that if you want to make a freehand selection of a particular area using **Lasso**, once you let go of the mouse, having completed the selection as close to the edges as you can, the line snaps to the nearest edge of contrast. In the **Tool Options** panel, you can also set this feature to **Auto Enhance** once the selection has finished drawing—sometimes this is beneficial, sometimes not. You'll find the same process in the quirky **Whiten Teeth** tool in **Quick** mode.



If you search for examples of how this selection tool is used, you'll probably find it's only applied to a certain type of image. The reason for this is simply that every image that requires a selection is very different from every other image—no one selection tool is ideal for all selection tasks.


Feather Selection

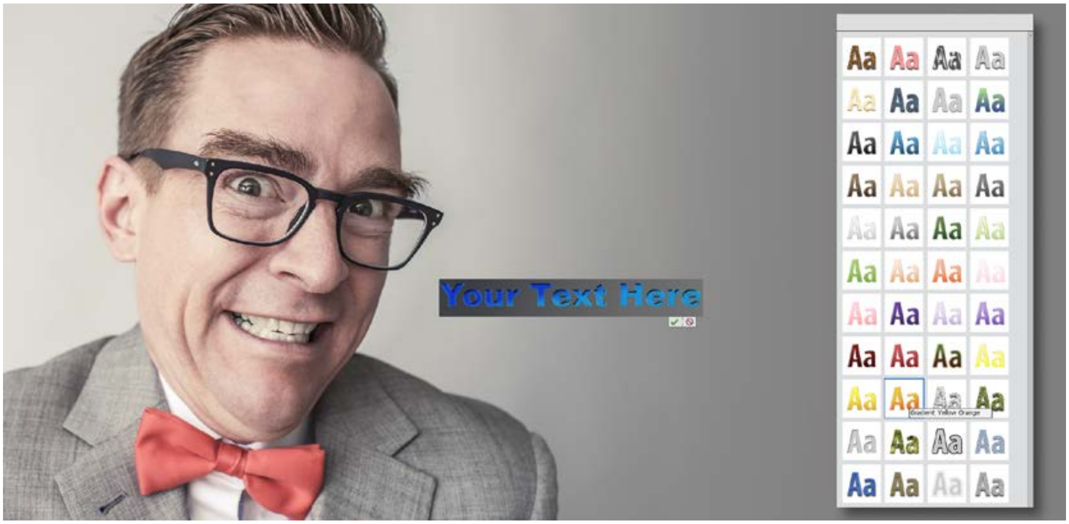
Learn more about: Feather Selection

Feather Radius: 5 pixels

Selection tip:

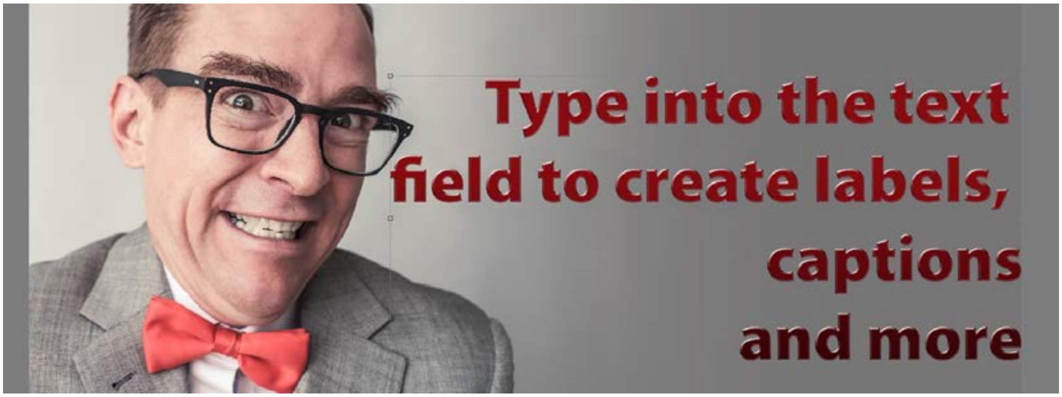
How much feathering should you use? This is a hard question to answer as there are so many variables: the resolution of the file, the selection size, the accuracy of the selection itself, and the final purpose of the exercise. I generally work with 20 megapixel images so begin with a feather of between 5-10 pixels. If I am blending an object into a background, I might choose a smaller pixel amount, especially if it's a tight selection. But if it's going to be going into a similar-sized document, I'd increase the feather to between 20 and 50 pixels. At the end of the day, it's always good to test a few different settings before moving on.

Adding text basics



Step one: For absolute beginners, the easiest way to add type into an image is to use the **Graphics** panel in the **Expert** edit mode. Click once on this panel and, from the drop-down menu at the top of the panel, choose **Text**.

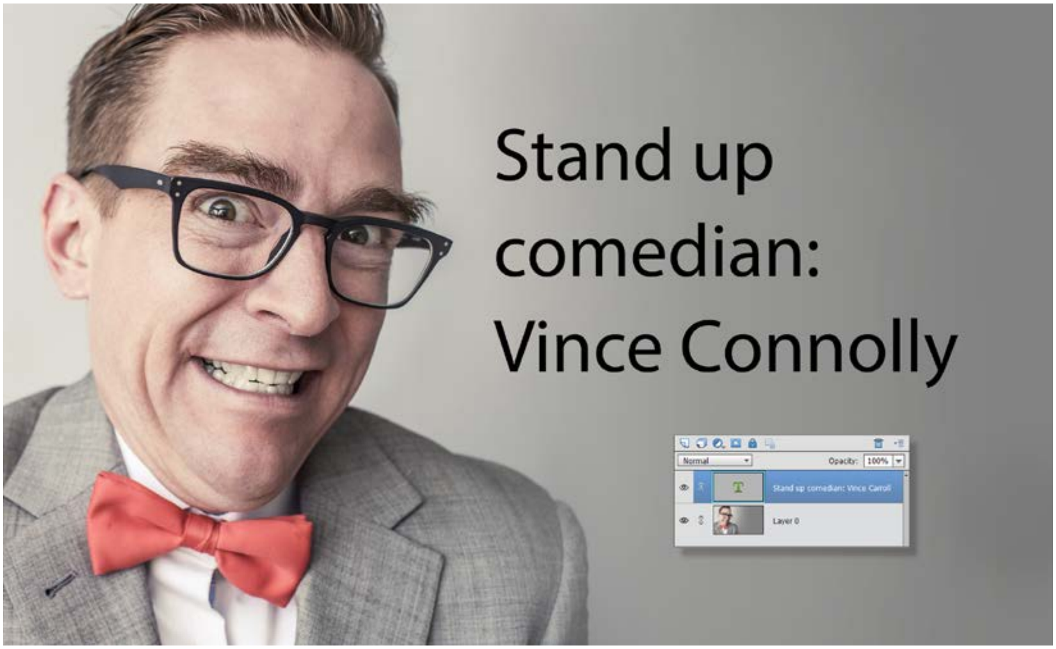
Step two: Choose a style from the expansive range of examples in the type panel. Click into the main image area and you'll see the ubiquitous **Your Text Here** type appear. Now, the trick with this—and all versions of the **Type** tool—is to ensure that you click inside that text first, to make it active, then type your copy into the field. If, in your excitement, you click away from the text, Elements "thinks" you have finished and the line of text becomes set. It's no longer editable. Because text always occupies its own layer, it's simple to click back into the text field to make it active again, then start your typing.



Type tool tips: Even though these Graphics Styles are semi-automated for you, everything about them can be further modified: font size, font style, leading, text color, position, justification, and special effects, exactly as you would with a regular text editor such as Word.

Adding text with the Type Tool

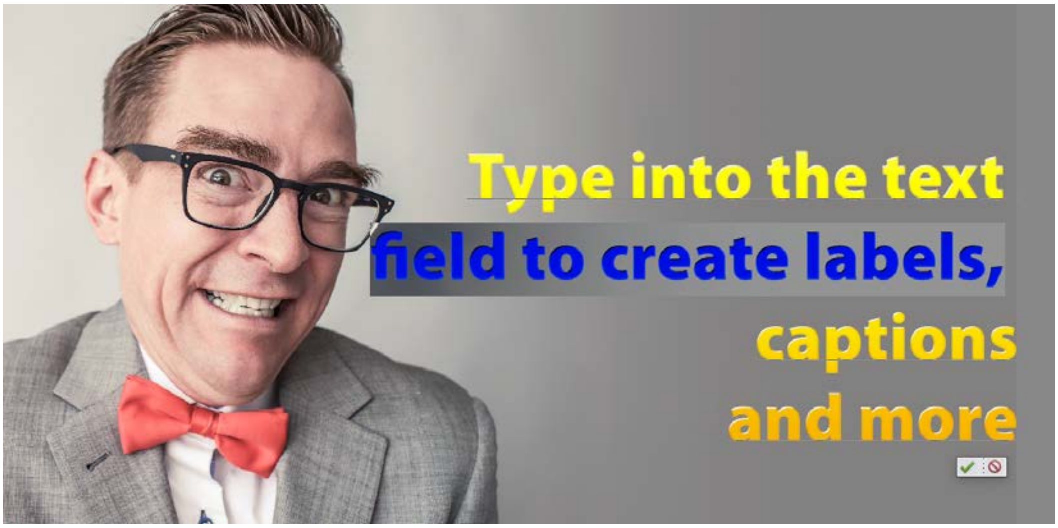
Photoshop Elements includes a word-processing functionality, enabling text to be added directly to images and graphics. In fact, some of the more automated functions on offer are supplied complete with blank text boxes, ready for you to click and add your words of wisdom, so it's easy to do.



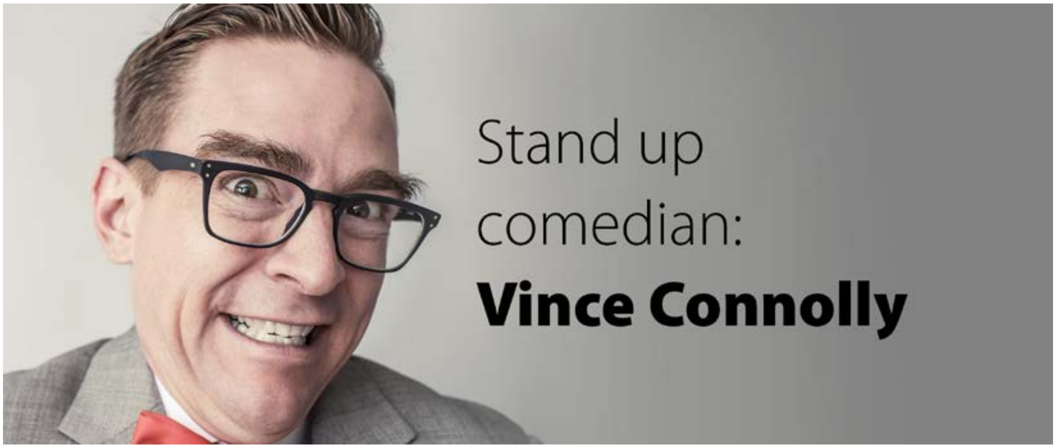
Step one: Choosing the **Myriad Pro Regular** font, I chose the **Horizontal Type** tool (as it is officially called), clicked once into the image, then typed in `Stand up` (hit *Enter*), `comedian:` (hit *Enter*), and then typed `Vince Connolly` to get this triple-deck text layout. The text is left-justified, and the type layer is automatically placed at the top of the layer stack (inset panel).

Font size tip:

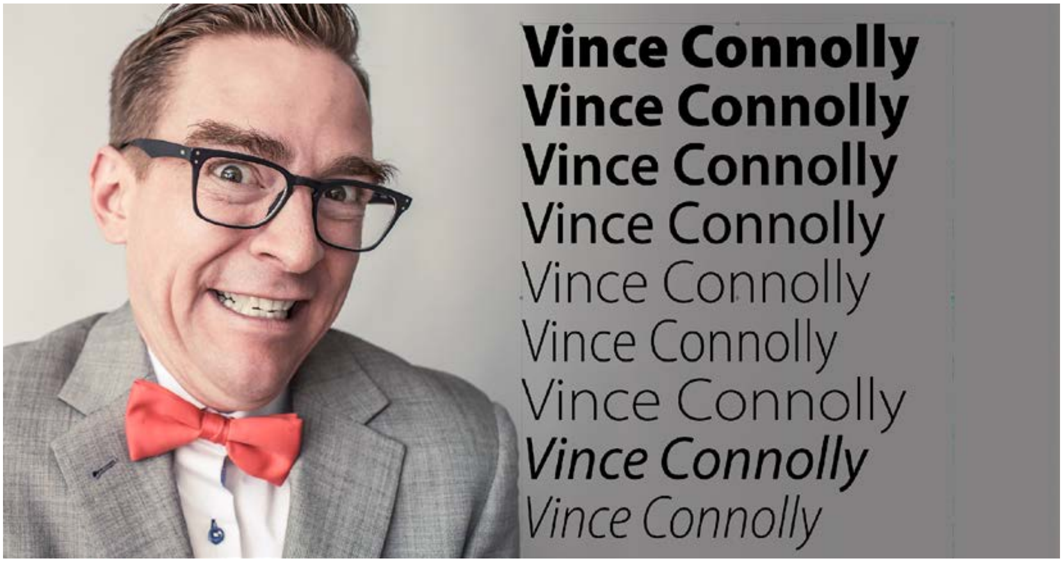
When you start using the type tool, you might notice that the text you've chosen appears very small, or far too large. This might be because last time Elements was used, you chose a small or very large point size in the **Options** panel. But more than likely it's caused by the document's resolution setting. If you are typing into a 20 Mp image set to a 72 dots per inch (dpi) resolution, it will print 2m x 1.5m - huge. So if you add 12pt text into a document that size, you'll understand why it looks so small. It's an easy fix: undo the last type layer, open the **Image Size** feature (**Image>Resize>Image Resize**), make sure that the **Resample** checkbox is **unchecked**, and change the resolution from 72 to 300 dpi. Save the file, select the **Type** tool once more, and when you add new text, it appears much larger in the main window because, at 300 dpi, the new dimensions are a smaller 20 x 35 cm, so the 12pt text looks larger. If the image is destined for social media, you need to resize the overall dimensions of the picture first to a suitable web resolution setting, before you start typing.



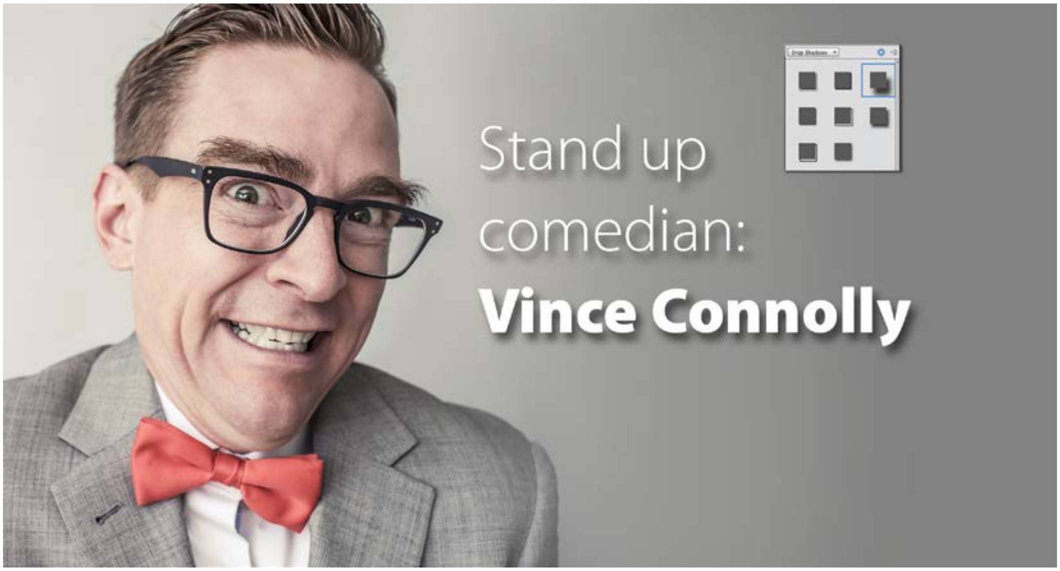
Step two: Once you have the document set to the correct resolution for your application, it's time to format the text. To make changes to pre-existing text, it first must be **selected**. This is where many newcomers might get into trouble. Selected text is highlighted in an opposite color—for example, black text is highlighted in white, and yellow text becomes highlighted in blue, as you can see above. It can look a little confusing.



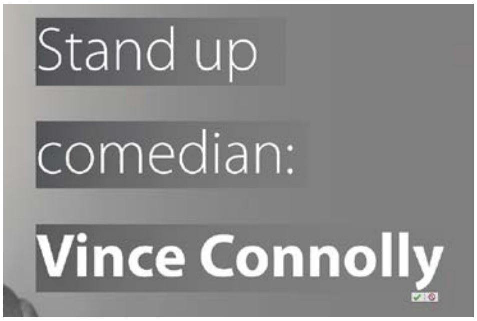
Step three: In this step, I modified the text **Style** - styles are variants of the same font; for example: **Italic**, **Regular**, **Semi-bold**, **Semi-italic**, **Bold**, **Black**, **Narrow**, **Light**, **Extended**, and so on. Some fonts only have one style; others, such as Myriad, have a lot). The beauty of working with styles is that everything is the same font family, and the styles are used to add **emphasis** to words by making them light, italics, semi-bold, bold, and even black. It's also perfectly fine to use different fonts in the same document, although it's also best not to have more than two or three at any one time—which is why styles can be so handy for creative copywriters. In this example, I changed `Stand up comedian` to **Myriad Pro Light**, while `Vince Connolly` was changed to **Myriad Pro Bold**.


Vince Connolly
Vince Connolly
Vince Connolly
Vince Connolly
Vince Connolly
Vince Connolly
Vince Connolly
Vince Connolly
Vince Connolly

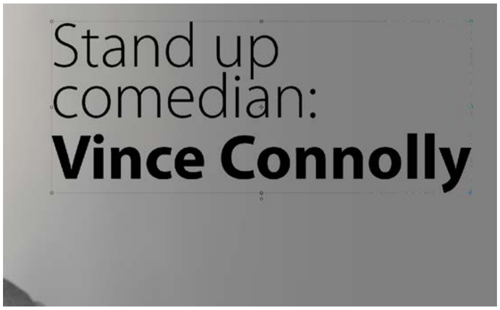
Design suggestion #1: To give you an idea of your choices in terms of **type styles**, here's a small sample of what's possible using a regular font such as **Myriad Pro**, from the top of the preceding screenshot: black, bold, semi-bold, regular, light, light condensed, light extended, italic, and italic semi-condensed. Your choice.


Stand up
comedian:
Vince Connolly
Drop Shadows

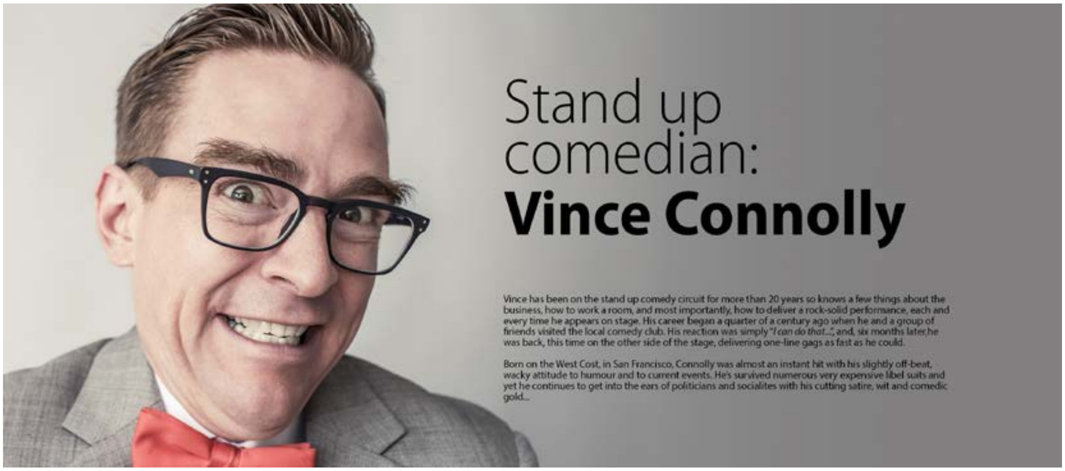
Step four: To emphasize text to a greater level, try using **Drop Shadow**. With the type layer as the **active layer** (highlighted in blue), navigate to the **Styles** panel, find the **Drop Shadow** sub-menu, and click on a thumbnail. This instantly applies a drop shadow to that layer.



Design suggestion #2: Leading is a useful design feature that you'll find on the **Type** tool's **Options** panel; use it to add or remove space from between lines of text, or even from between single words. By default, this is set to **Auto**, which normally works OK, but if you particularly want two lines of text to be closer together, manually enter a figure and adjust accordingly.



Design suggestion #3: Here's the leading reset to a smaller value than on the left. Use leading to close the space between lines of text as a group (changing all three lines of text in one hit) or select a single line, then change the leading on just that to push that line further away from everything above it. Note that you must select ***all*** the text, including any spaces in that line, in order for the leading to work.



Vince has been on the stand up comedy circuit for more than 20 years so knows a few things about the business, how to work a room, and most importantly, how to deliver a rock-solid performance, each and every time he appears on stage. His career began a quarter of a century ago when he and a group of friends visited the local comedy club. His reaction was simply "*I can do that...*", and, six months later,he was back, this time on the other side of the stage, delivering one-line gags as fast as he could.

Born on the West Cost, in San Francisco, Connolly was almost an instant hit with his slightly off-beat, wacky attitude to humour and to current events. He's survived numerous very expensive libel suits and yet he continues to get into the ears of politicians and socialites with his cutting satire, wit and comedic gold...

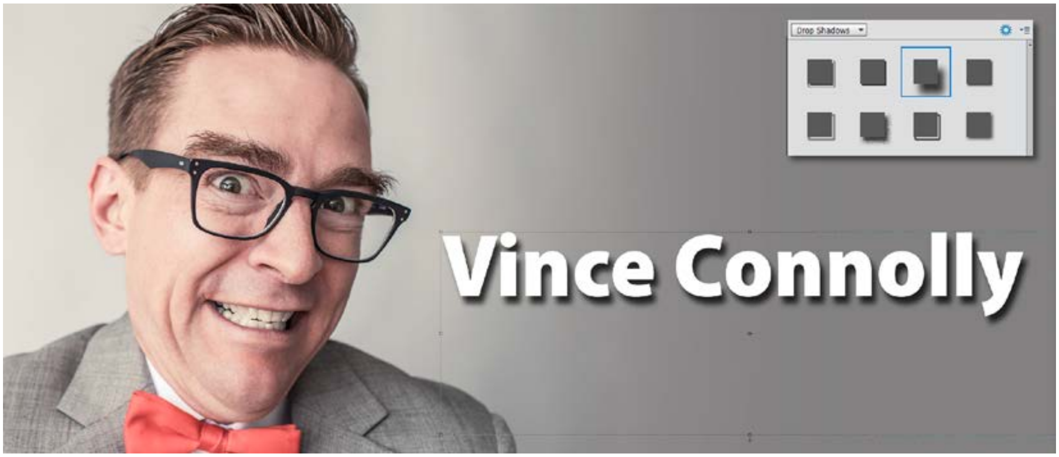
Design suggestion #3: A text box can be created by dragging the **Type** tool cursor over the image to draw a box. When you release the mouse, start typing. The text is held inside the parameters of that box. This is handy if you have sourced a big bunch of text from a word-processing document. Create a text box, copy the content from the word-processing document, then paste it into the Elements text box.

Design suggestion #4: To select text that is currently being typed, use *Ctrl/Cmd* + *A* to select all. If the document has already been saved, then, with the **Type** tool selected, you need to first click inside the text once (to make it the active layer), then double-click the text to select a single word, or triple-click to select an entire sentence. If you're using a text box and want to select everything in that box, you will need to quadruple-click, very quickly, to select everything in that text layer.

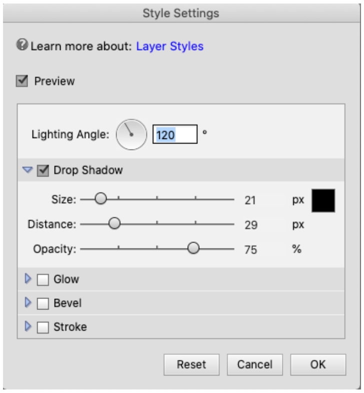
Text styles and special effects

The **Type** tool allows users to apply the usual font styles and color to your text. But there's a lot more to using text than simply typing into an image.

With your text layer active (highlighted in blue), you can apply any of Elements' **Layer Styles** from the **Styles** panel that's located on the right-hand side of the main window. The most common style that's used with text is the Drop Shadow. Drop shadows are particularly effective for making text stand out from the page, especially if the background under the text is distracting.



Step one: Elements makes it easy to apply special effects. Choose **Drop Shadow** from the drop-down menu at the top of the **Styles** panel, pick one of the shadow "looks," and click its icon to apply the style to that particular layer. If you don't like this effect, try clicking another icon, and that new look will replace the old one. Using **Styles** in this way allows even novices to make their text productions appear professional in no time at all.



Style Settings

Learn more about: Layer Styles

☑ Preview

Lighting Angle: 120 °

☑ Drop Shadow

Size: 21 px

Distance: 29 px

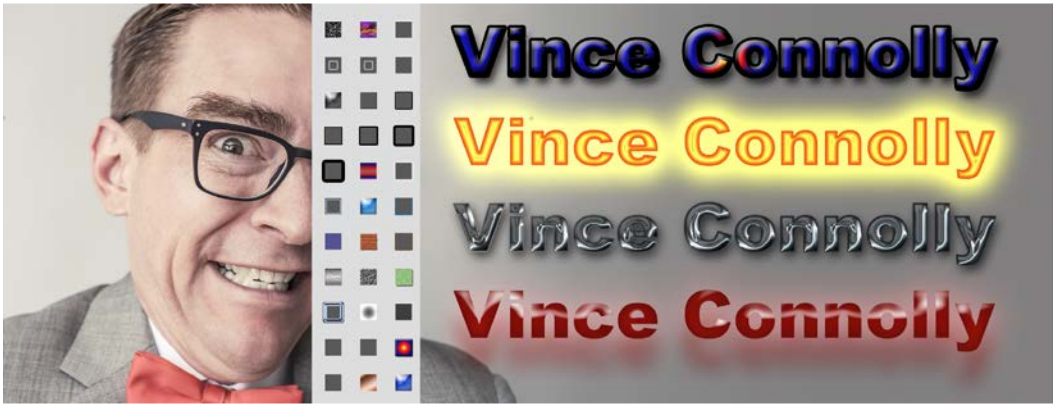
Opacity: 75 %

☐ Glow

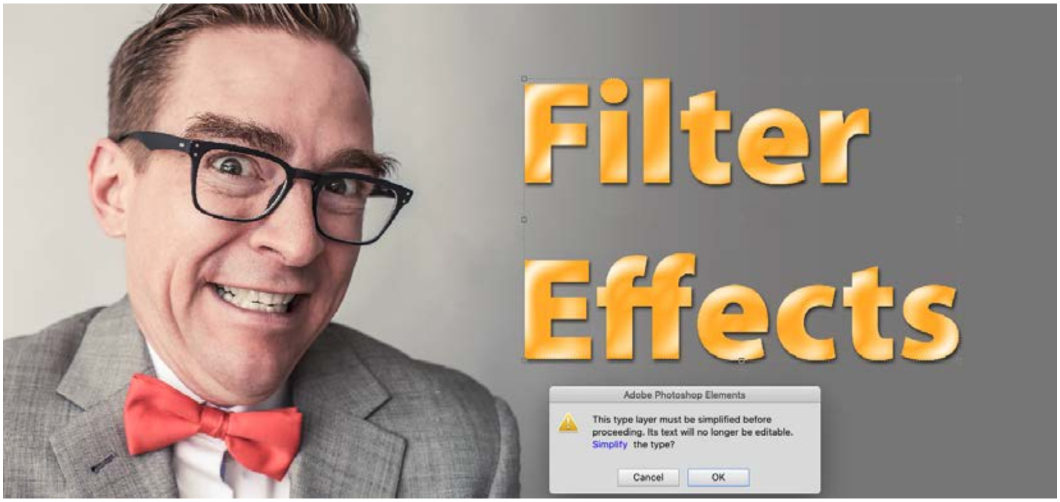
☐ Bevel

☐ Stroke

Step two: If you don't like the "looks" recipe, it can be modified by accessing that layer's **Style Settings**. Open the **Layers** panel; you will note that a small **fx** logo has appeared next to the text layer's description. Double-click the **fx** icon to open up the **Style Settings** panel. In this window, you can see the exact recipe that creates the drop shadow as you see it. If you want to make the shadow darker or lighter, or appear further from or nearer to the surface of the document, fiddle with the sliders to modify that particular setting. You'll also find other special effects on this panel, including **Glow**, **Bevel**, and **Stroke** (the Photoshop term for an outline).



Design suggestion #5: When trying out a new **Layer style**, do bear in mind that some of them, such as Photographic Effects, will only work on pixel-based photos and have almost no impact on text, and vice versa. Also, if you try to apply a drop-shadow effect on a full-frame image, it won't work because the photograph occupies the entire screen; however, if you were to apply a drop-shadow effect on an image that has been reduced in size, it will display a drop shadow. The trick with text is to experiment with some of the styles to see which suits your project best. Many of the styles that you see in Photoshop Elements have been with this software for a long time (more than 10 years), and so might appear somewhat dated.

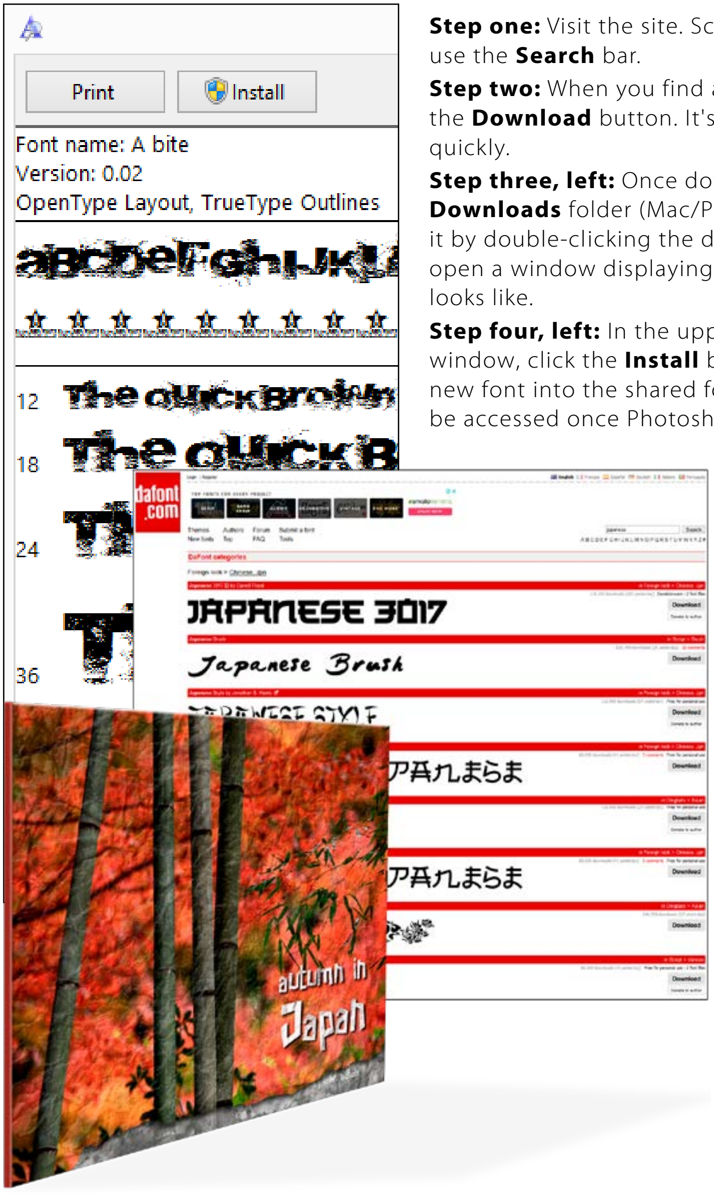


This type layer must be simplified before proceeding. Its text will no longer be editable. Simplify the type?

Design suggestion #6: If you try out some of Elements, Filter Effects (from the **Filters** panel seen on the right-hand side of this illustration), you'll find that they don't work—unless first simplified. This means that the layer being used has to be converted into pixels first before the effect can be added. It's a simple process and, as you see here, Elements warns you so you can accept or cancel accordingly. Bear in mind that, once simplified, text layers lose their editability. So, typos, text recoloring, font changes, and extreme enlargement are no longer permissible. This text layer was simplified, then it had the **Dry Brush** filter added to break up the normal hard-edged nature of vector text. Elements provides hundreds of different creative possibilities with this feature.

Custom fonts

If you are looking for a special font to match a particular theme or character in one of your Elements projects, one thing you could consider is downloading a *custom font* from a site such as `www.dafont.com`. There are a lot of places advertising "free" stuff—I have never had any issues with this one, but I'd be mindful of what, and where you click, in some of the more disreputable sites online. I have been using fonts from Dafont for many years and it seems pretty reliable. Here's how it's done:



Font name: A bite
Version: 0.02
OpenType Layout, TrueType Outlines

Step one: Visit the site. Scroll through the pages or use the **Search** bar.

Step two: When you find a font to your liking, click the **Download** button. It's small and so downloads quickly.

Step three, left: Once downloaded—to your **Downloads** folder (Mac/PC)—locate the file and open it by double-clicking the downloaded file icon. It will open a window displaying what the font physically looks like.

Step four, left: In the upper left-hand side of this window, click the **Install** button. This will pop that new font into the shared font folder, which can then be accessed once Photoshop Elements is restarted.

Main image, lower left: In this example, I chose a font called **Papercuts**, which suited the Autumn in Japan theme of my book.

A word of warning: Not all the fonts I have downloaded and tried from the internet have worked once installed. I get about an 80% success rate—possibly because of compatibility issues—either way, seeing as these are free, I still think it's a good deal!

Keyboard shortcuts

As with most editing, you can lose sight of the image-making process and become too immersed in the more complex editing functions. Keyboard shortcuts are there to help spread the load, reduce **repetitive strain injury** (**RSI**), and generally speed up your workflow. I use the first three in the following list all the time. It's also beneficial for you to memorize some of the tool access keys (letters) to make it easier to jump from process to process. Some of these are shown here:

- *Ctrl/Cmd* + *J*: Duplicate the (active) layer.
- *Ctrl/Cmd* + *D*: Use this to deselect or remove any active selection.
- *Ctrl/Cmd* + *T*: Use this to transform objects on the active layer.
- *Ctrl/Cmd* + *E*: Merge down.
- *Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *E*: Merge (all) visible (layers).
- *O*: Burn, Dodge, and Sponge tools.
- *A*: Selection brushes (Quick Selection, Selection Brush, Magic Wand, Refine Selection, and Auto Selection).
- *L*: Lasso tools (Freehand Lasso, Polygonal Lasso, and Magnetic Lasso).
- *S*: Clone Stamp tool (also the Pattern Stamp tool).
- *J*: Spot Healing Brush and Healing Brush.
- *B*: Brushes (Brush tool, Impressionist Brush, and Color Replace Brush).
- *E*: Eraser brushes (Eraser, Background Eraser, and Magic Eraser brushes).
- *K*: Paint Bucket tool.
- *G*: Gradient tool.
- *Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *S*: **Enhance>Select Subject**.

Out of the hundreds of possible keyboard shortcuts published for this program, I consider those on this page to be the most important. They sum up the most practical features in this program and, once learned, will advance your understanding and editing proficiency tenfold.

Summary

In this chapter, we once more ramped up the depth of knowledge to present the best learning experience possible.

As you may well now be aware, it's possible to spend your entire working life immersed in the work of commercial photography and professional retouching. All the tools are here in Elements, but if you need to take the control you require to a higher level, this was the chapter for you, especially the sections on professional-grade retouching, selections, burning, dodging, masking, text, and graphics.

We also highlighted a couple of simple ways to make selections—Adobe is continuously attempting to incorporate AI into its semi- and fully automated processes. In the case of its new **Subject Selection** feature, I think you'll agree it's a winner.

Having so many varied and powerful features at your disposal gives you a far wider range of creative options than just being able to add the odd preset effect to an image. If you can master this chapter, you'll be well on your way to becoming a retouching expert.

Coming up in the next chapter are plenty of in-depth sections for those who want more information about the power of illustration, graphics, drawing, and painting.

7

Additional Tools and Features

Elements continues to grow and expand with each new version released. While many of its new features are more often concerned with operating efficiency than with cool new tools and amazing features, there's usually plenty of new stuff to satisfy even long-term users such as myself.

One problem Adobe has is that there's already so much in this application that finding new stuff must be getting tougher and tougher for the designers. Photoshop Elements already has an amazing range of tools, both manual and automated, so finding applications for new ones is becoming something of a hard task—and I guess if Adobe really wanted to, it could pass on a few more features from its flagship Photoshop CC for Elements users to enjoy too. But of course, passing on too much would really negate any requirement to upgrade to Creative Cloud.

Personally I think Elements has more than enough tools to satisfy the dreams of every image editor, but that said, one area that has produced new features in recent versions has been the development of its artificial intelligence research—something the company calls Adobe Sensei—and I think this is a great development. Its AI tools are, for the most part, ambitious and wide reaching, but guess what: most of them work really well. Who knew?

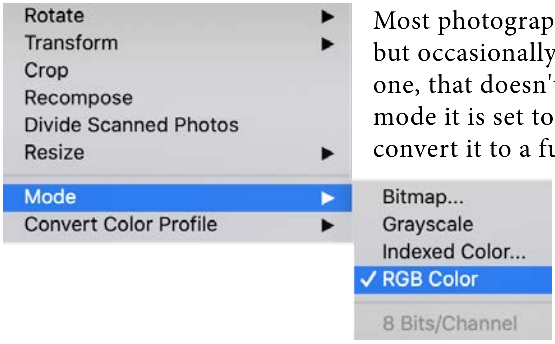
So, although not principally concerned with its AI features, you'll find a bunch of really neat Adobe Sensei-driven features plus a bunch of really good features that you might never have previously looked at. I hope this stimulates you to experiment more, and hopefully once tried, these features might help promote your work to even higher possibilities.

What you'll learn from this chapter:

- Image Modes
- Adjust Color Curves
- Eraser tools
- Smart Brush
- Paint Bucket tool
- Gradient tool
- Haze Removal feature
- Content Aware tool
- Recompose tool
- Move and Scale Object
- Moving Photos
- Quote Graphics
- Convert to Black and White
- Duotone Effect
- B&W Color Pop
- Old Fashioned Photo
- Perfect Landscape and Perfect Portrait
- Adjust facial features
- Adjust Facial Features: Face Tilt
- Open Closed Eyes
- Using Plugins

Image Modes

It's a feature found in all photo editing applications but it rarely gets a mention. Most photographers only ever work in RGB mode—the color mode used by both the camera and the computer monitor. Professionals working in print (with Photoshop CC) will inevitably work in another mode: **CMYK** (**Cyan**, **Magenta**, **Yellow**, and **Black**). We don't have this in Elements.



Most photographers will only ever encounter RGB mode, but occasionally you might be sent a file, or download one, that doesn't edit properly, so it pays to check what mode it is set to. Choose **Image>Mode>RGB Color** to convert it to a full color file, or choose the 8-bit option, if needed (Elements cannot handle higher bit depth files). Other modes under the **Image>Mode** menu include **Grayscale**, **Indexed Color,** and **Bitmap**.

Grayscale mode: RGB files have three color channels, Grayscale has one: grey. When you convert from RGB to **Grayscale**, expect the resolution to drop by 60%. In a regular 8-bit file, a grayscale image has just 256 shades of gray. RGB files have millions of colors.

Indexed Color: A mode common to the fledgling internet days. An indexed image allows you to limit the color range in the file, making the image smaller and faster to display over slow connections.

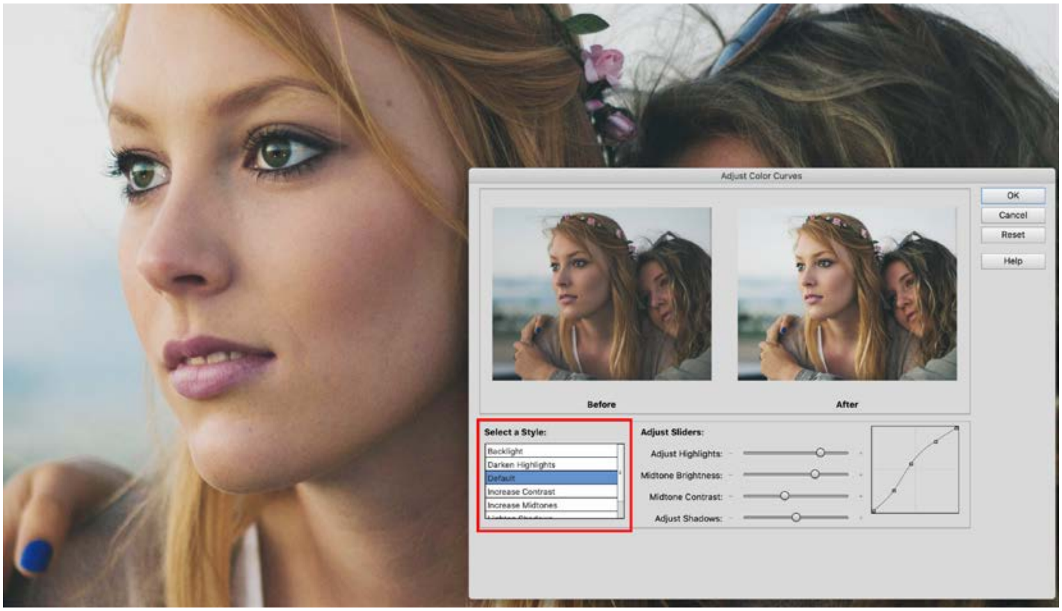
Bitmap mode: The smallest—and least-used—of all image modes. Bitmaps are made from just two bits: black and white, so files are small and suited for simple graphic images. Bitmaps have a finite enlargability—so when it comes to graphics, they are not as useful as vectors.

Adjust Color Curves

It might come as a shock to some readers but Photoshop Elements is actually based on Photoshop CC. Of course, most of the features are unique to Photoshop Elements but they have their origins in Elements' higher-end cousin **Photoshop: Levels**, **Hue/Saturation**, **Shadow/Highlights**, **Brightness and Contrast**, **Image Size**, **Canvas Size**—these are all identical to those in Photoshop.

And indeed, if you use a software plugin such as **Photoshop Elements+**, you can actually open up and exploit legacy Photoshop features that are still present in Elements. One tool that's sort of part Photoshop and part Elements is called **Adjust Color Curves** (**Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Color Curves**).

The **Curves** tool in Photoshop is a useful feature and while **Adjust Color Curves** could be called the poor cousin, it's still a good feature with which to adjust the contrast in an image.


Adjust Color Curves
OK
Cancel
Reset
Help
Before
After
Select a Style:
Backlight
Darken Highlights
Default
Increase Contrast
Increase Midtones
Adjust Sliders:
Adjust Highlights:
Midtone Brightness:
Midtone Contrast:
Adjust Shadows:

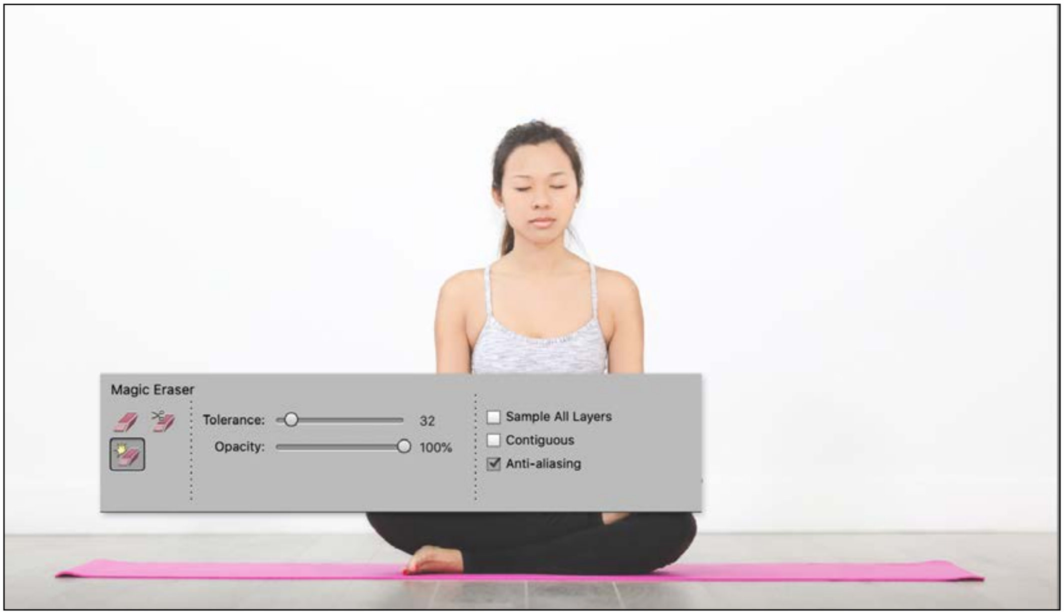
Photoshop CC is designed for those who know exactly what they want from an image—and what tools are needed to achieve that result. I'd argue that Elements can produce pretty much the same result, but the program's tools often differ in the sense that they come with a lot of "extras"—including help menus and presets. So, in **Color Curves,** you'll find a **Style** list (in red)—these are preset adjustments—**Backlight**, **Darken Highlights**, **Increase Contrast**, and so on. If this is not enough for a good result, use the **Adjust** sliders in the centre of the panel. What these are doing is displayed in the curves map on the right-hand side, with the shadows at bottom left, and highlights at top right. In Photoshop, you adjust the image by click-pushing the actual curve line, whereas this Elements version is more preset-driven. It still works a treat. Its best feature, in my opinion, is that you can easily adjust both midtone contrast and brightness, which can produce a significant improvement to most images.

Eraser tools

Before computers, graphic-design studios used a range of analogue drawing tools such as pens, pencils, brushes, and charcoals. They also used a range of *erasers* to remove mess, mistakes, and drawing errors. Photoshop Elements also has a range of eraser tools, the most useful being the **Eraser Tool**. Use this to remove excess pixels when blending different pixel layers together, for example. The **Eraser** Brush works with all brush tips, and if used on the **Background Layer (the bottom one in the layer stack)**, it will always erase to the background color (which will be black by default). If you are erasing on a duplicated layer, it will reveal the pixels on the layer immediately beneath it.

The **Eraser** Tool has three brush modes: **Block**, **Brush**, and **Pencil** – although I think the **Brush** setting is the best for most retouching tasks as it's the softest and most controllable. The speed of the erasing process is controlled by the **Opacity** slider in the **Options Panel**. Set it to `50%` and you'll have to go over the layer twice to remove all the pixels.

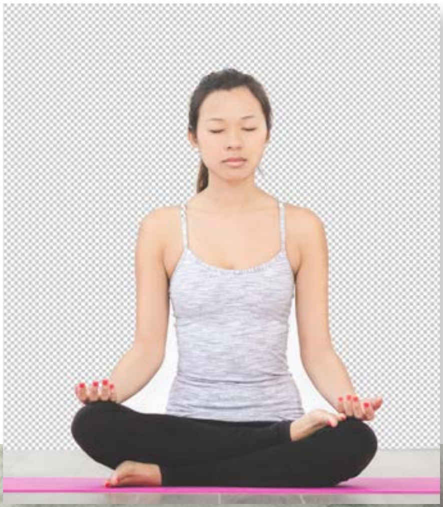
Background Eraser is also useful tool because it functions based on the brightness of the pixels being clicked. Click the background and drag the cursor though the image. It should erase only those that are close in color to the initial click, leaving other colors untouched.



Tolerance: 32
Opacity: 100%
☐ Sample All Layers
☐ Contiguous
☑ Anti-aliasing

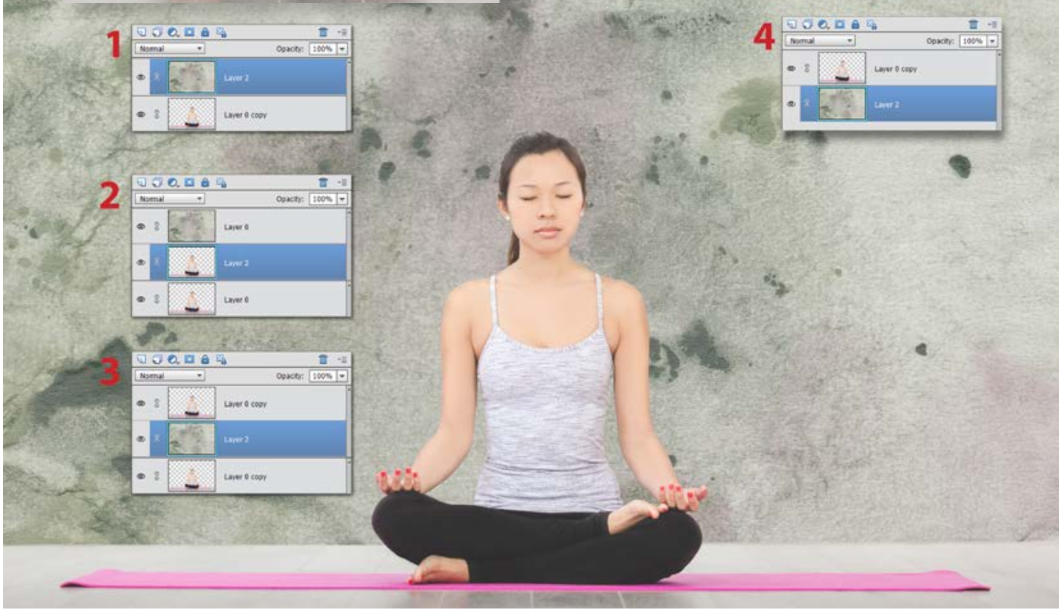
Step one: In this example I chose to use **Magic Eraser** because the background I want to change is even in tone. All that's needed is to choose the **Magic Eraser** tool, check the **Tolerance** and **Brush** size settings and then click the image. As **Contiguous** was not checked in the **Options Panel**, though it selected all the background, it missed the space between the woman's arms and body. An understandable mistake but easy enough to fix—either by trying again with **Contiguous** checked or by holding the *Shift* key and clicking on the bits initially missed.

Use the **Tolerance** slider to increase/decrease how much latitude its color selection has. Its efficiency, like many tools in photo editing, relies on the type of file being edited as much as the capability of the tool used.



Step two: Magic Eraser, as the name might suggest, "magically" removes same-colored pixels once clicked. If the background is just a single color, it's an efficient tool. If the background is composed of many different-colored pixels, one of the other two eraser tools might do a cleaner, more accurate job.

Check the document to ensure all the correct bits have been selected. Hold the *Shift* key and click again to scoop up any missed pixels. Note that the **checkerboard pattern** indicates transparency—there are no pixels present.

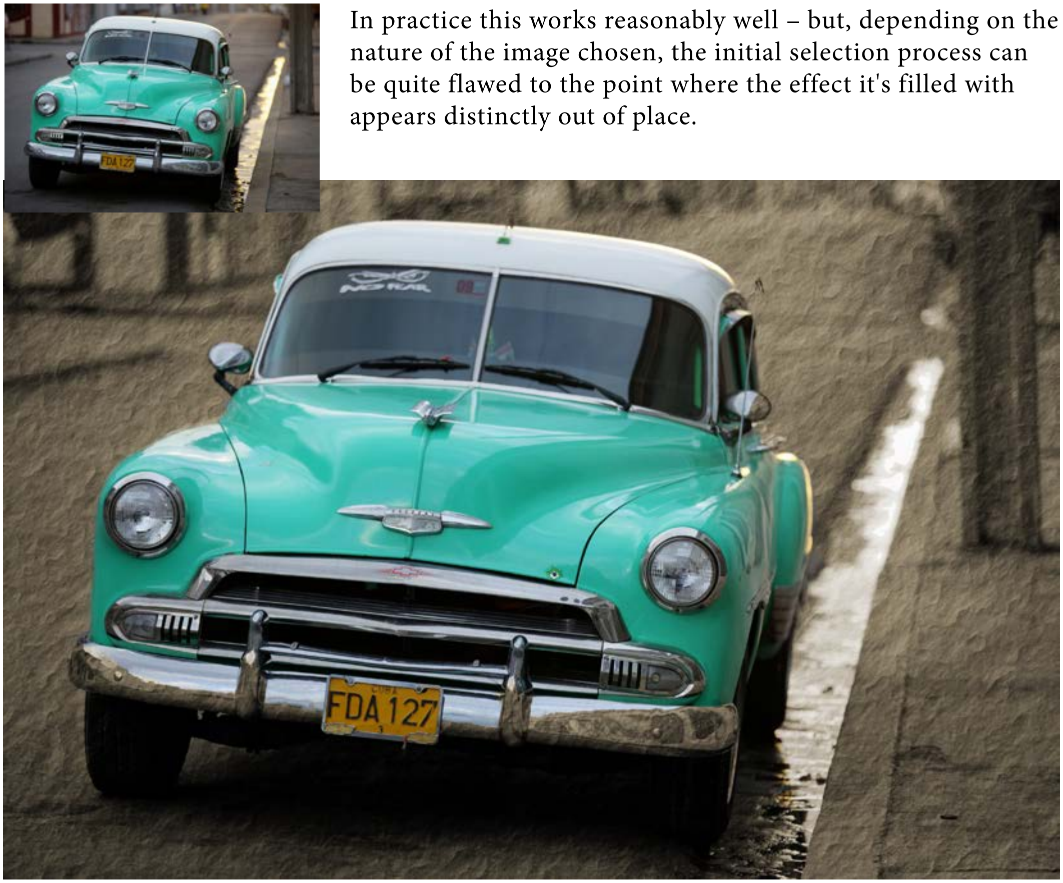

1
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 2
Layer 0 copy
2
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 0
Layer 2
Layer 0
3
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 0 copy
Layer 2
Layer 0 copy
4
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 0 copy
Layer 2

Step three: In this last step, I opened a textured wall image from my picture library and copied and pasted it into the document. It was the same resolution as the yoga image so it pasted in at the same size (1). To get the background texture behind the figure, rather than on top of it, I had to duplicate the yoga layer (2), then drag the background texture layer in between the two yoga layers (3), then delete the bottom yoga layer (4).

Smart Brush

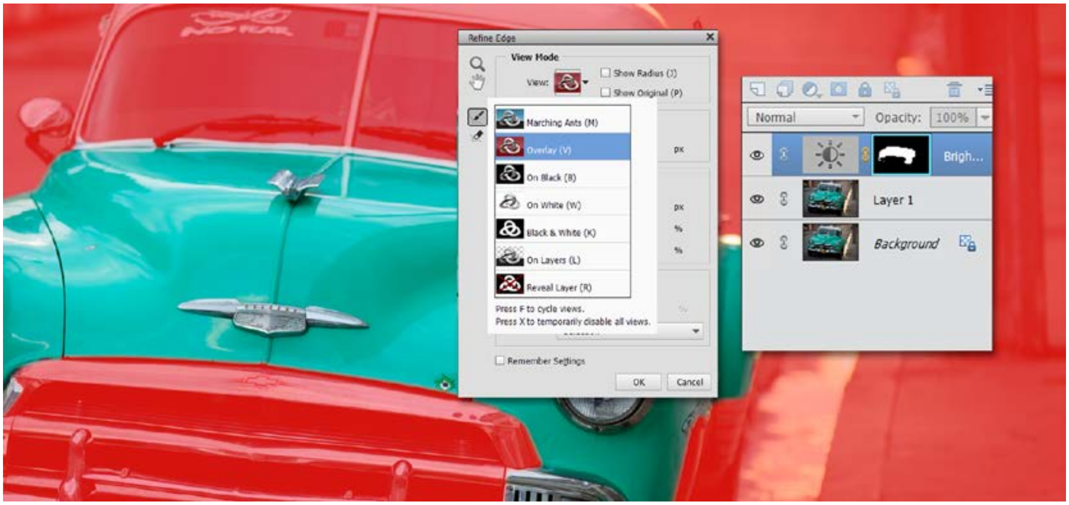
Here's an unusual tool—a special effects brush that works in tandem with a selection brush. Paint into an image and the brush finds contrast edges (around the subject), makes a selection, and fills it with whatever style of **Smart Brush** is currently set.

In practice this works reasonably well – but, depending on the nature of the image chosen, the initial selection process can be quite flawed to the point where the effect it's filled with appears distinctly out of place.

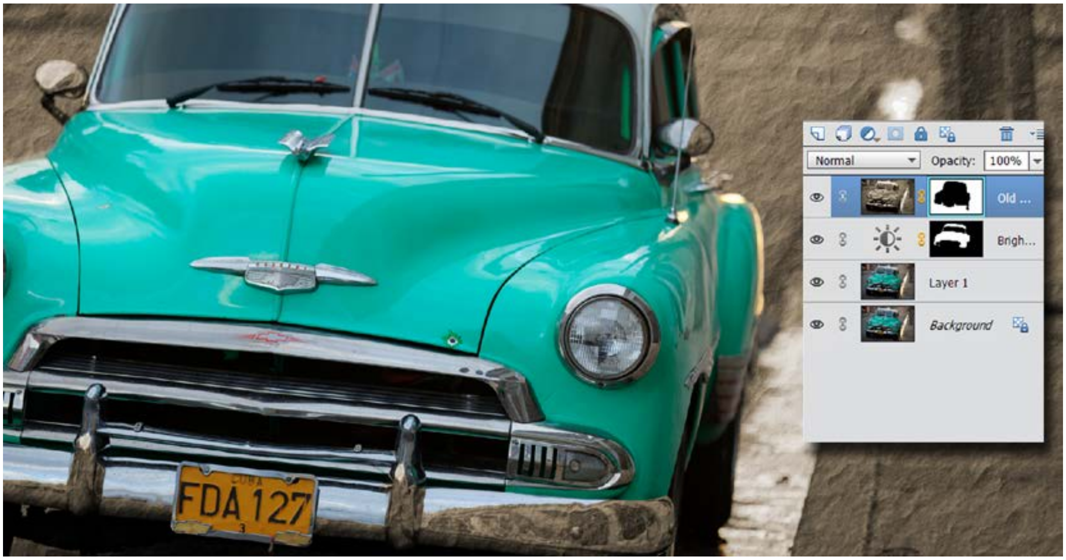


That said, **Smart Brush** includes the **Refine Edge** utility—this allows users to soften, blur, widen, shrink, and smooth the brush selection edge to make the result look more realistic. Personally, I find this brush a bit too optimistic in what it tries to produce—everything is reliant on the efficacy of the selection process. But in this example I was pleased with how well it did work.

The tool features more than 90 different effects, divided into 12 subsets, to make choosing them a little easier. To get the best from this tool, I suggest you start with simple images.


Refine Edge
View Mode
View:
☐ Show Radius (J)
☐ Show Original (P)
Marching Ants (M)
Overlay (V)
On Black (B)
On White (W)
Black & White (K)
On Layers (L)
Reveal Layer (R)
Press F to cycle views.
Press X to temporarily disable all views.
px
px
%
%
☐ Remember Settings
OK
Cancel
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Brigh...
Layer 1
Background

Step one: In this example, I first used the **Brighter Smart Brush** setting—essentially, this selected the roof of the car and lightened it. By combining the **Smart Brush** effects with the modification power of the **Refine Edge** utility (here showing as a red mask overlay), it's possible to make an accurate selection quickly. Obviously, the simpler the image, the easier it is to get great results with this feature.

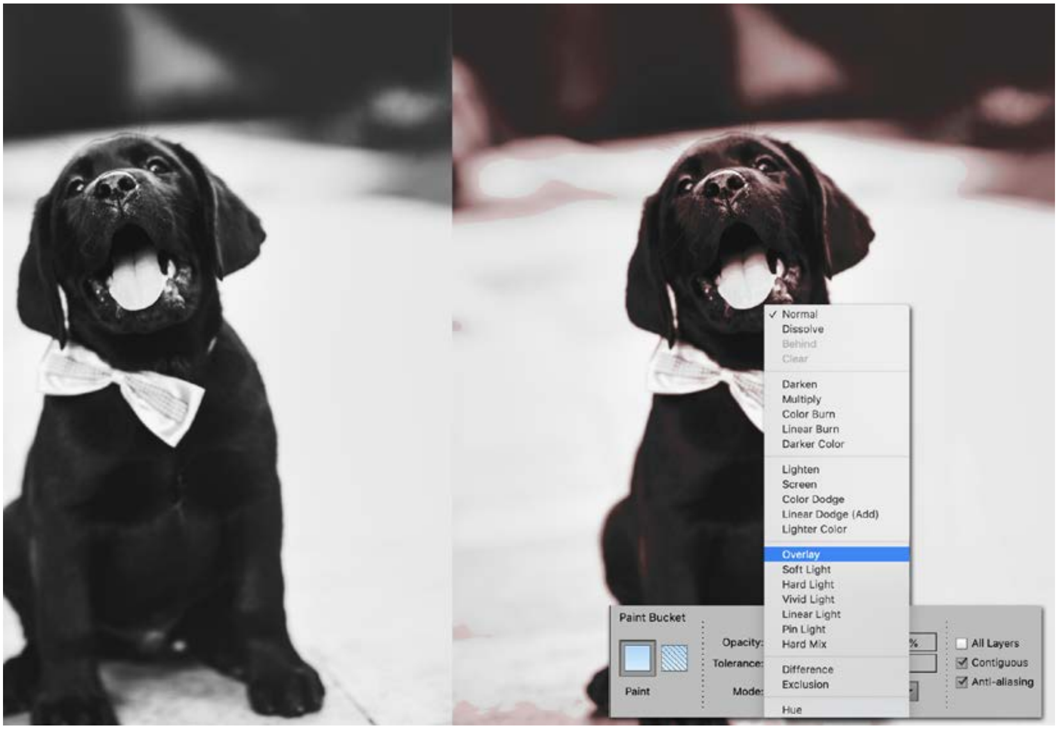

Normal
Opacity: 100%
Old ...
Brigh...
Layer 1
Background
FDA 127

Step two: Almost done—the second application was called **Old Paper** (a filter effect that's been in Elements for many years). I thought it suited the mood of the old 1950s car parked in a Havana side street. You can see the two associated **Adjustment Layer masks** in the layer panel; one for the brightness increase, and the second for the Old Paper effect that's dropped into the mask. This is a fun feature!

The Paint Bucket tool

The **Paint Bucket** tool, as its name suggests, works like a real bucket of paint. Choose a color from the Tool Bar **Color Picker**, click in the image, and it will throw a bucket of color across the image. OK—so your beautiful landscape is now all black (or whatever color was picked up in the **Picker**). By default, **Paint Bucket** has several adjustments:

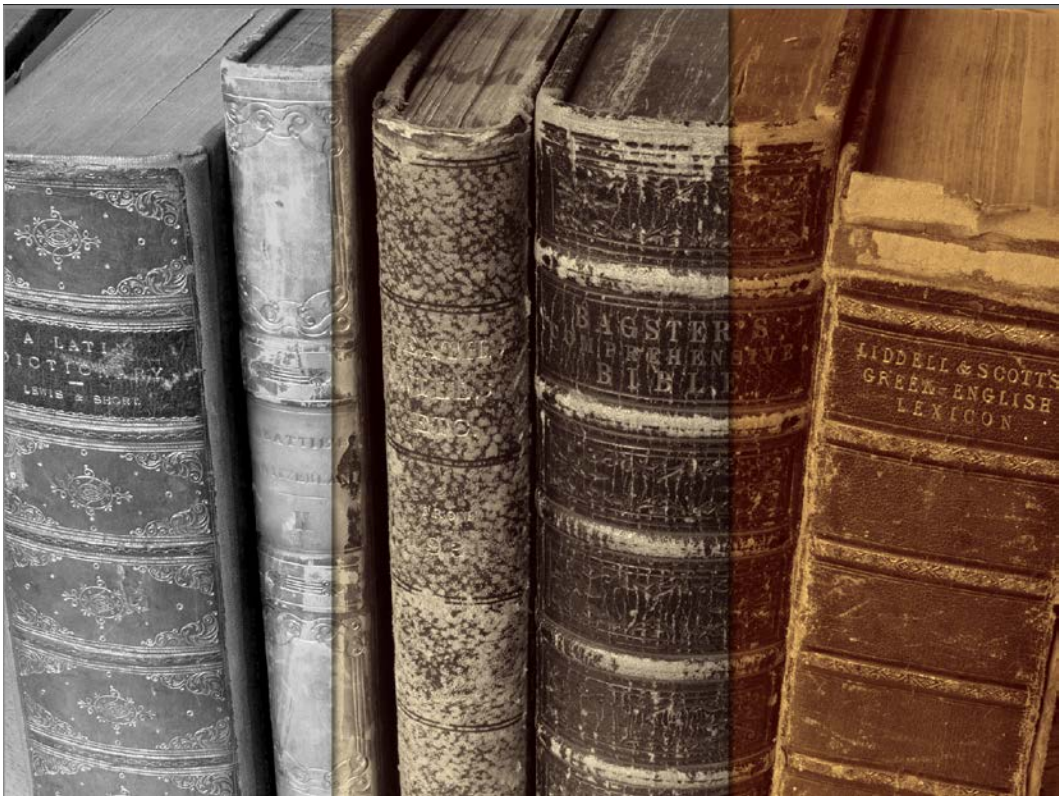
- **Opacity** (which works as if you are watering the "paint" down).
- **Blend Mode** (which affects how the paint color reacts with the pixels it's poured over.
- **Contiguous** mode (which means it only affects similar-colored pixels if they are adjoining each other).
- **Tolerance** (which dictates how sensitive it is to identifying similar-colored pixels over which it spreads). The default number of 255 means the paint covers the entire image regardless of what you clicked. Set to a smaller value, such as `15`, and it only affects pixels that are very similar in tone to the ones initially clicked.


✓ Normal
Dissolve
Behind
Clear
Darken
Multiply
Color Burn
Linear Burn
Darker Color
Lighten
Screen
Color Dodge
Linear Dodge (Add)
Lighter Color
Overlay
Soft Light
Hard Light
Vivid Light
Linear Light
Pin Light
Hard Mix
Difference
Exclusion
Hue
Paint Bucket
Paint
Opacity:
Tolerance:
Mode:

☐ All Layers
☑ Contiguous
☑ Anti-aliasing

A good use for this tool that few people realize is its ability to **add contrast** or a **color tint** to an image, especially if it's black and white, as shown here. Set **Tolerance** to the max (`255`), **Opacity** to **10%**, **Blend Mode** to **Overlay**; choose black from **Color Picker**; and then, click something that's already black in the image (the dog's body, in this example). Each time the image is clicked, you add 10% more black to dark areas. If it doesn't work as expected, uncheck the **Contiguous** checkbox (in the **Tool Options** panel) and see if that improves the spread of paint. Using the **Overlay** blend mode ensures that the original tonal gradation of the picture shines through the black tone being added to the frame.

If I'm looking at an image that contains, say, a block of white, and I click on it, **Paint Bucket** instantly replaces white with whatever is set for the bucket. It won't go past the edges of the white block. If **Contiguous** is unchecked, it affects every white pixel in the file.



Another good use for this tool is to tint an image with color, or black and white (contrast). You can do this by going through the following steps:

Step one: Open the shot and choose a tint color (typically, photographers use this to warm up or cool down an image). I chose yellow from **Color Picker**.

Step two: Set the tool opacity (in this example I set it to 10%).

Step three: Set **Tolerance** to the maximum (**255).**

Step four: Choose a **Blend Mode** setting from the tool **Options Panel** (I find that **Overlay** seems to work well). **Overlay** gives the paint a specific *translucence* so that the tones in the image are not hindered by adding opaque paint, as they might be in real life.

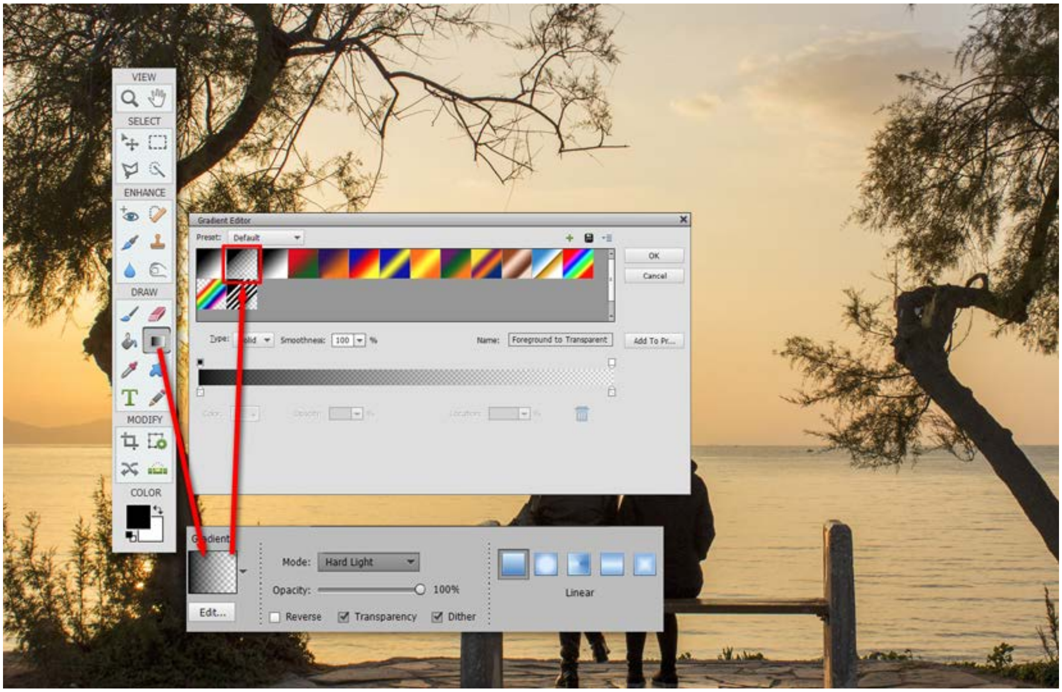
With each click, the tint deepens by 10%. In this example, I tinted a black-and-white image of these old books with deep yellow - twice, to give a pale sepia effect (as shown in the center example), and three more times to warm it up considerably to produce a warmer, deeper sepia tint.

Gradient tool

Another greatly underrated tool in Elements is the **Gradient** tool. Those photographers among you that have used a graduated resin filter over the front of the lens from manufacturers such as **Cokin**, **Lee Filters**, and **B&W** will know what I am talking about.

Place the filter over the lens and position the darker part over the sky, with the clearer section at the base over the landscape. This effectively reduces the sky exposure, thereby balancing the often large exposure disparity that leaves us with an overexposed upper half and an underexposed lower half of the frame. Graduated filters come in different colors (such as orange to enhance sunsets or sunrises).

This tool comes with 16 default gradients and eight gradient subcategories, giving you a choice of 83 in total. I have only ever used two or three.



Preset: Default

Smoothness: 100 %

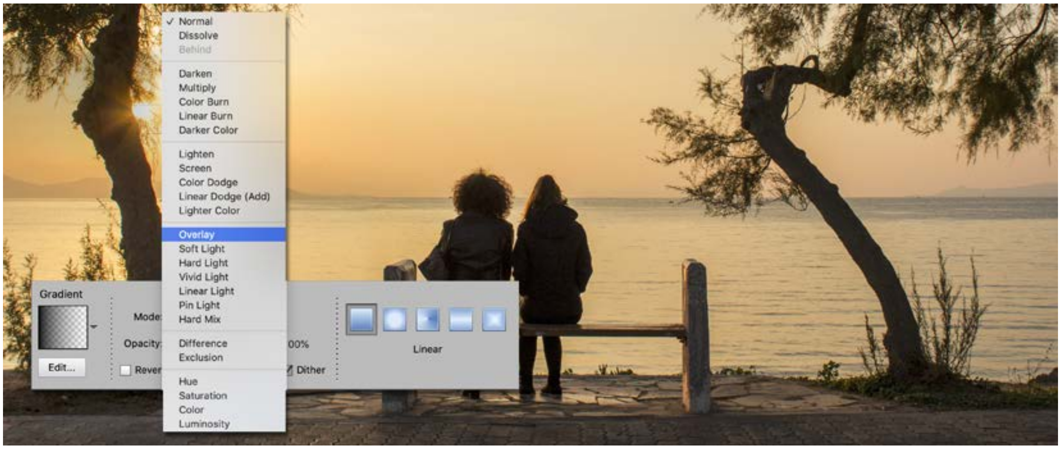
Name: Foreground to Transparent

Mode: Hard Light

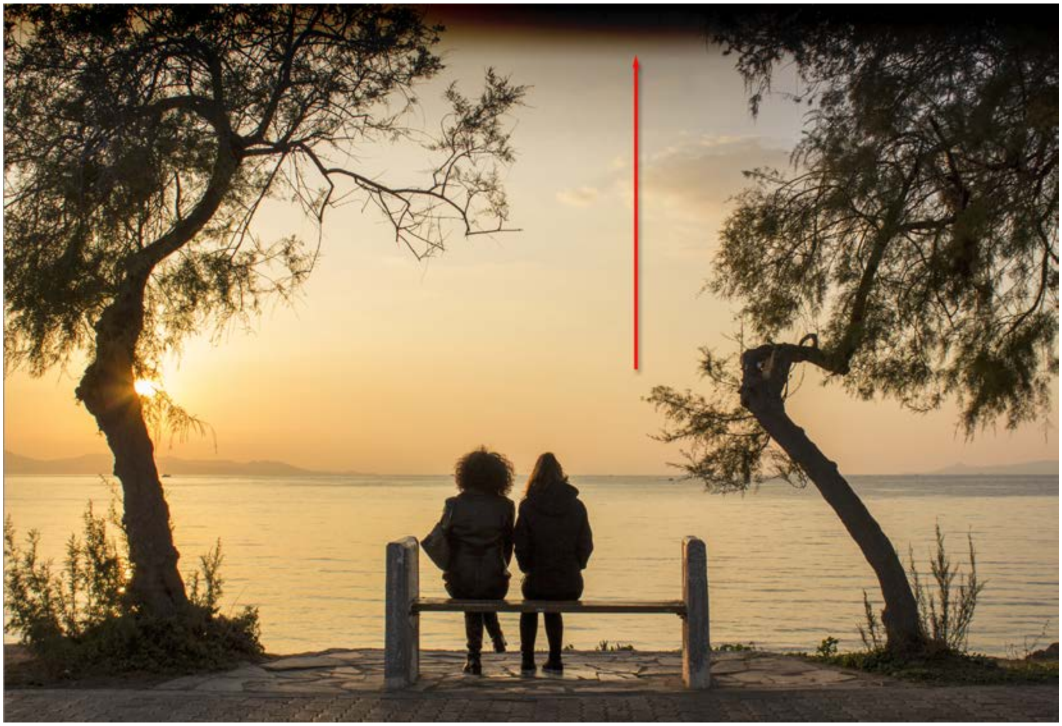
Opacity: 100%

☐ Reverse ☑ Transparency ☑ Dither

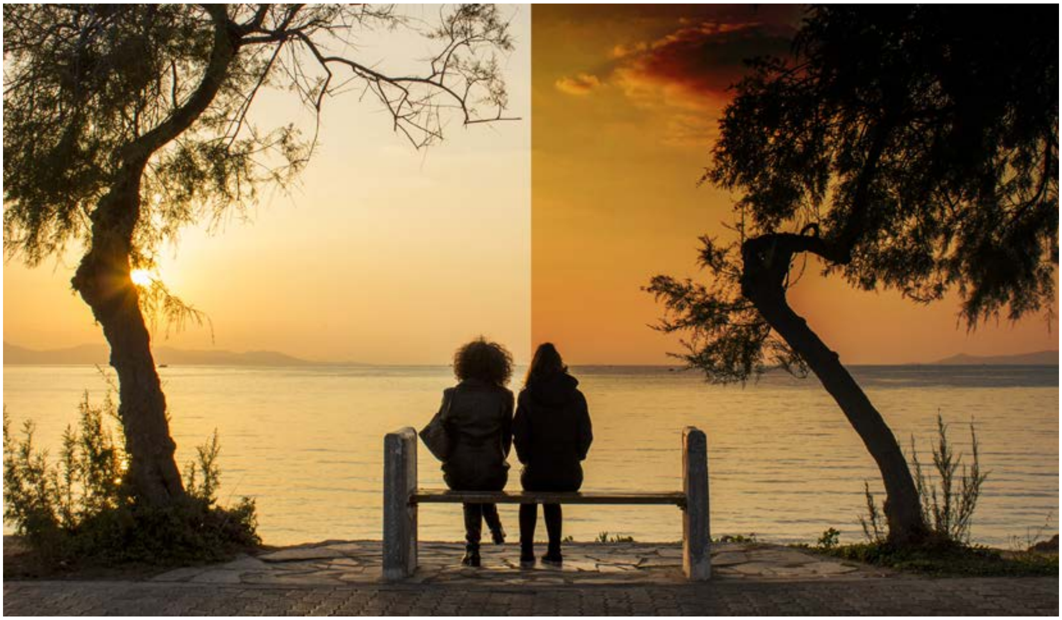
Step one: Here's a nice shot, complete with two figures silhouetted by a bright sunset. Click the **Gradient** tool icon (**Tool Bar**) and then click the gradient thumbnail in the **Tool** options panel (highlighted in red), to open the complex-looking **Gradient Editor**. Because my **Color Picker** was already set to its default black background, you can see that the thumbnail, second from the left, is black, fading to transparent (highlighted in red in the image). Click once to select, then hit **OK**, and you are good to go.


✓ Normal
Dissolve
Behind
Darken
Multiply
Color Burn
Linear Burn
Darker Color
Lighten
Screen
Color Dodge
Linear Dodge (Add)
Lighter Color
Overlay
Soft Light
Hard Light
Vivid Light
Linear Light
Pin Light
Hard Mix
Difference
Exclusion
Hue
Saturation
Color
Luminosity
Gradient
Edit...
Mode:
Opacity:
Rever
00%
Dither
Linear

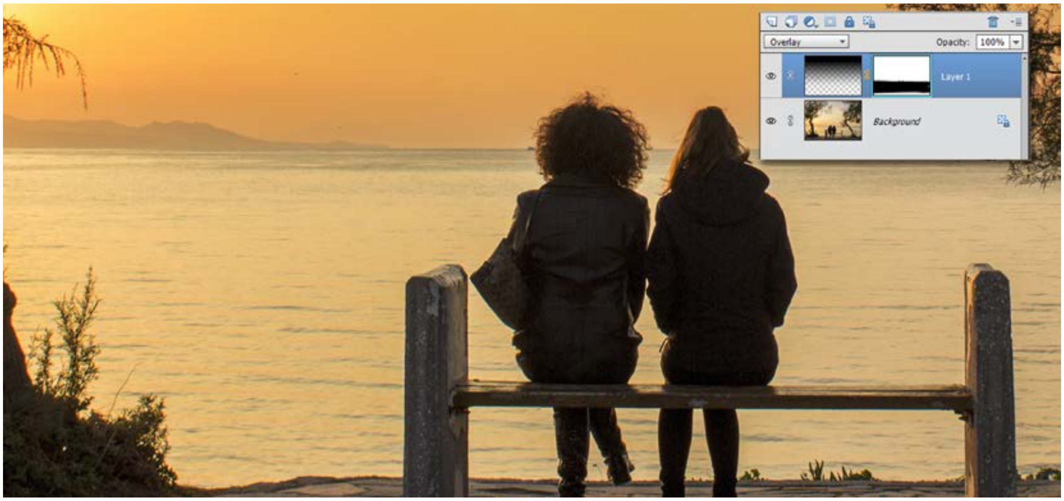
Step two: If you use the **Gradient** tool immediately, by click-stretching it vertically from the top to the bottom of the frame, it will deposit opaque pixels, which will look horrible. You first must change the tool's **Blend Mode** setting from **Normal Opaque** to **Overlay**. This is like thinning the paint so that the details shine though the color tint, rather than being totally obscured by it.



Step three - technique: If you only drag the gradient a short way across the screen, the gradation will be very steep, and therefore quite noticeable—something you might not want. In this example, the gradient is so steep it looks like a mistake—which it is.



Here's a before and after comparison. On the left is the original file, and on the right half is the image featuring a gradient, applied twice, so that it's quite a dramatic color change from the original (alternatively use a Gradient Adjustment Layer).



Overlay

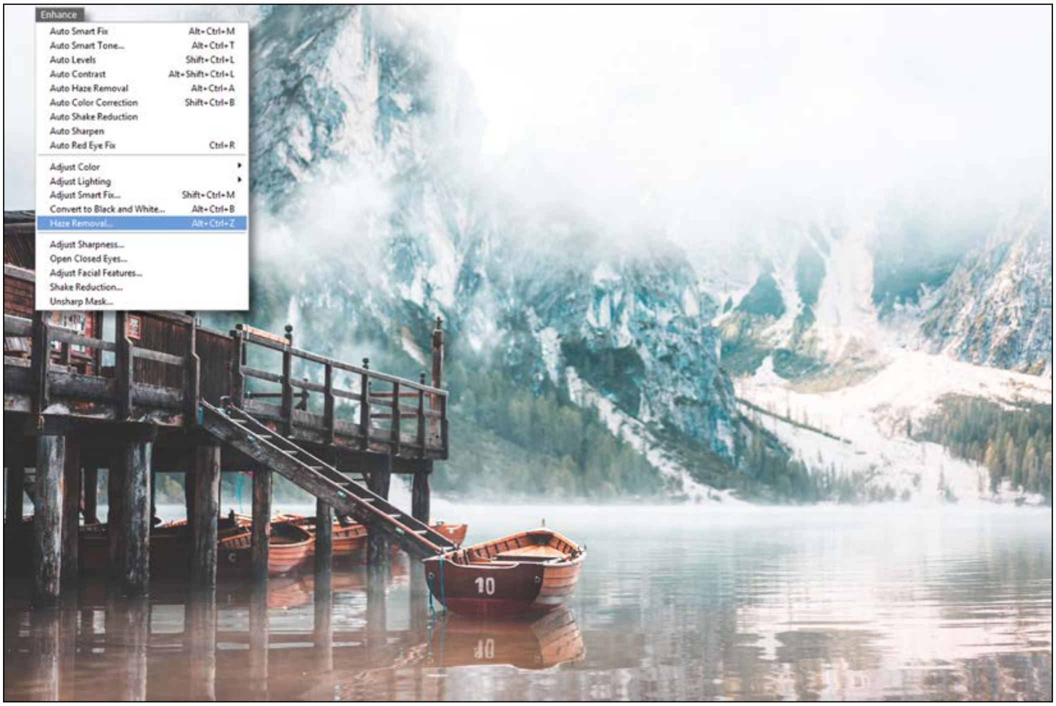
Opacity: 100%

If you'd like to retain greater control, create a new layer (**Layer**>**New Layer**) and apply the gradient to that so it can be repositioned or the opacity of the layer can be adjusted. Make sure that **Overlay** is selected from the **Layer** panel drop-down menu; otherwise, it will look opaque. Another way of taking greater control over the gradient would be to add a **Layer Mask**, then paint black into the mask to modify the gradient—in this case, from the couple sitting on the bench, the ocean, and the foreground.

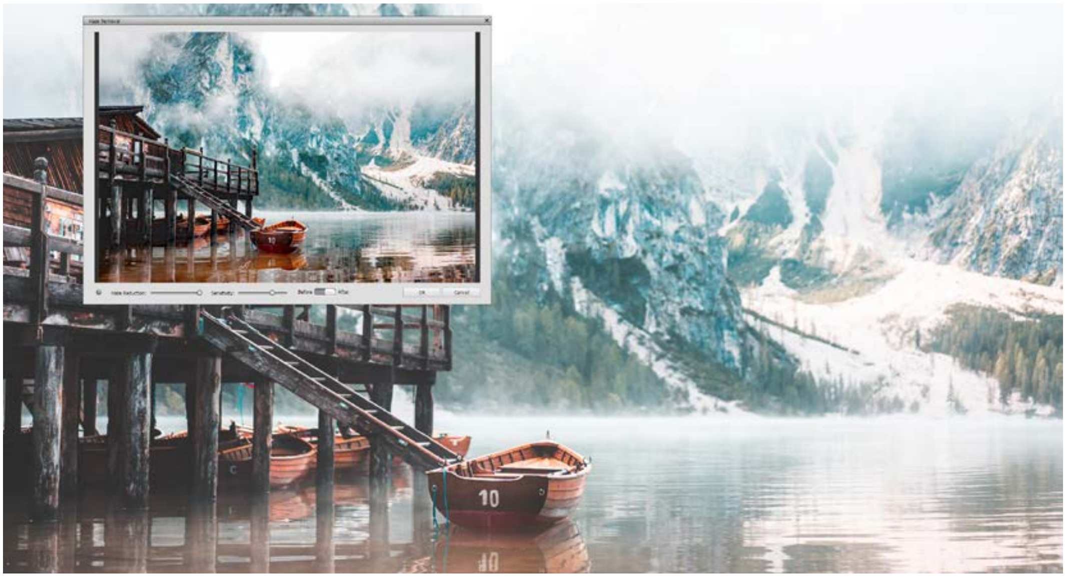
The Haze Removal tool

Another great feature of Elements is its **Haze Removal** tool. This is a tool that's designed to boost the mid-tone contrast in your photos, and it works incredibly well on hazy, misty, steamy pictures where the clarity is suffering. You'll note, in the examples shown here, that once processed, the finished images also appear sharper. This is because the sharpening process is all about the **contrast differences** along subject edges, which is what the **Haze Removal** tool does—so it might not only fix the climatic conditions, but also make the scene appear sharper.

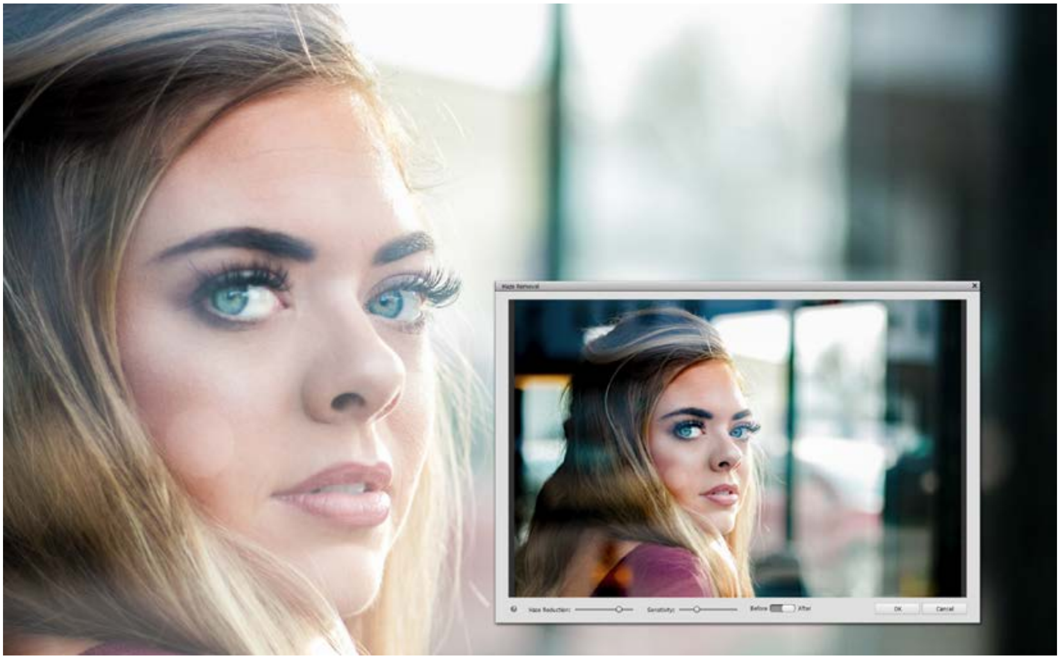
It's also beneficial on some black and white images, low-contrast images, and sometimes it's just good to add to a picture to add a bit of *punch*. Elements features two versions: one is the **Auto Haze Removal** tool, which does a credible job, but if it's control you need, it's best to go for the regular **Haze Removal** tool in the **Enhance** menu and use its sliders to perfect the effect on each image, one at a time.


Enhance
Auto Smart Fix Alt+Ctrl+M
Auto Smart Tone... Alt+Ctrl+T
Auto Levels Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Contrast Alt+Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Haze Removal Alt+Ctrl+A
Auto Color Correction Shift+Ctrl+B
Auto Shake Reduction
Auto Sharpen
Auto Red Eye Fix Ctrl+R
Adjust Color
Adjust Lighting
Adjust Smart Fix... Shift+Ctrl+M
Convert to Black and White... Alt+Ctrl+B
Haze Removal... Alt+Ctrl+Z
Adjust Sharpness...
Open Closed Eyes...
Adjust Facial Features...
Shake Reduction...
Unsharp Mask...
10

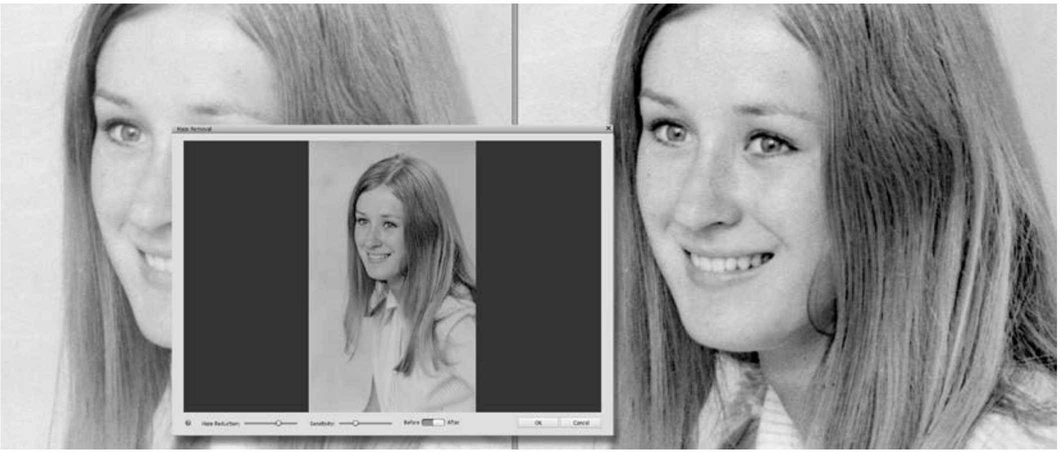
The sample image seen here is more of a snowy image than a hazy image. The sky is indistinct due to slight overexposure and the low cloud. Select **Enhance**>**Haze Removal** from the **Enhance** menu.


Haze Removal
Haze Reduction
Sensitivity
Before
After
OK
Cancel

Above: This is the easiest filter to play with. Use the sliders at the base of the self-contained filter panel to make adjustments. For some reason, this doesn't update your slider changes in the main window until the **OK** button is pressed, then it's too late. If you don't like the result, Undo then re-do the process. Easy. The finished image (**below**) is looking a lot stronger visually.


Haze Removal
Haze Reduction:
Sensitivity:
Before
After
OK
Cancel

Above: Here's another use of the **Haze Removal** tool, where we are enhancing a slightly low-contrast (but not hazy) image. Because this feature adds mid-tone contrast, it's perfect for adding a bit of punch to the image. Of course, this doesn't work for all images, but when it does work, the result is quite impressive.


Haze Removal
Haze Reduction:
Sensitivity:
Before
After
OK
Cancel

This feature keeps on giving: In this example, I have taken an old print that has been scanned and retouched, but its tones are still lacking in contrast. It's an ideal image to test the **Haze Removal** tool on. As is clearly visible in this before-and-after illustration, haze removal is also a good bet when it comes to adding contrast "punch" into scanned images. It doesn't work with everything, but it's certainly effective in this example.

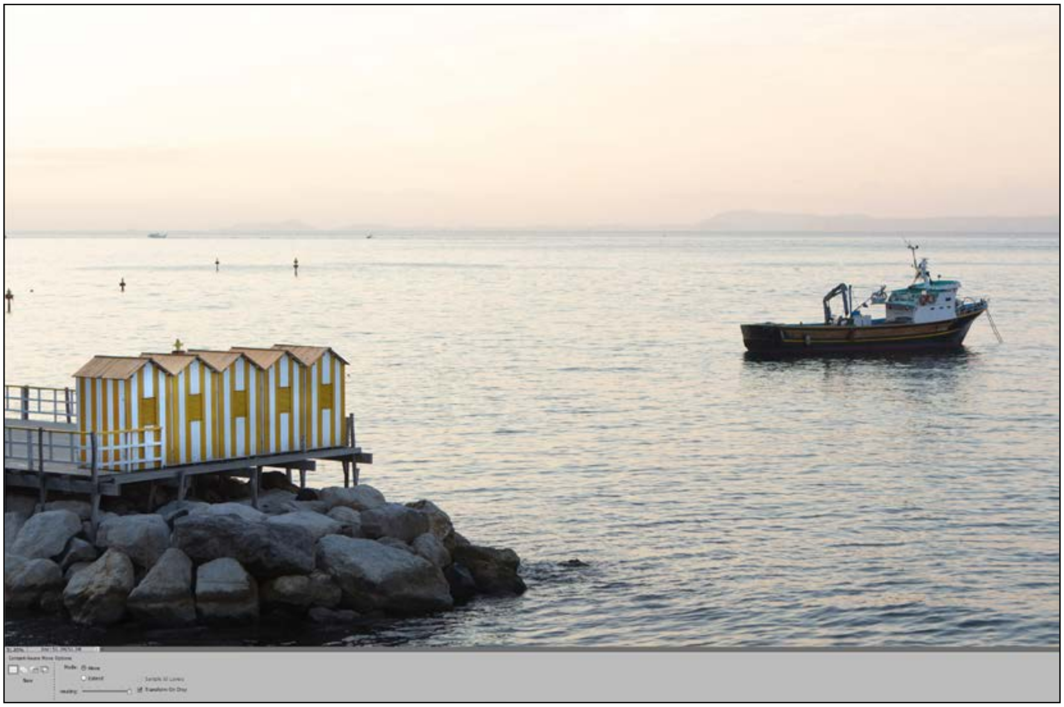
The Content-aware Move tool

A tool that might help fine-tune your **compositional skills** is the **Content-aware Move tool**. Essentially, this is a large-scale **Healing Brush**, but instead of clicking repeatedly over an image hoping that it can copy, paste, and blend pixels over a problem area, this tool works on a much larger area. Draw around the object you want to move, drag the entire object to a new position, and release it – Elements will do the rest.

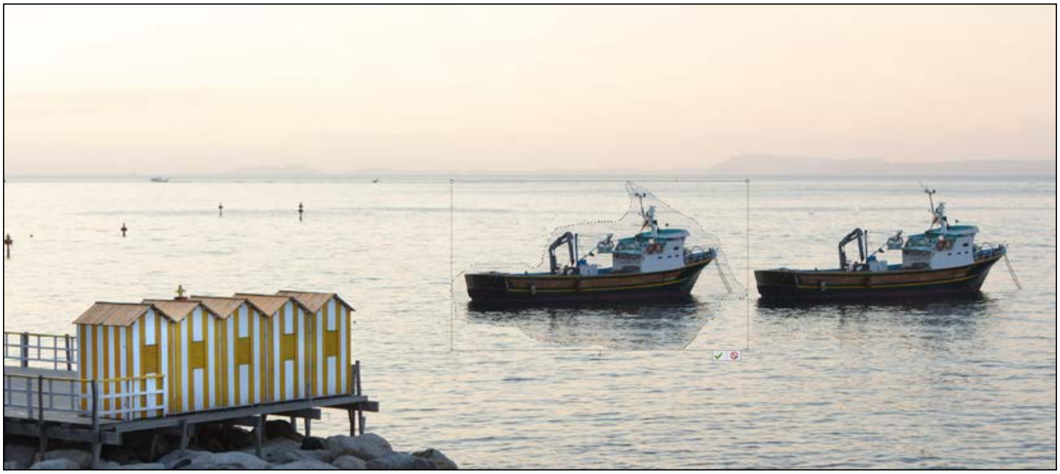
Here, *the rest* means assessing the pixels around the target site and then blending them into the background canvas. Some examples work much better than others.

Elements provides some control over the **Healing** action (via a slider), plus **Add** or **Subtract** modes, for the initial selection process.

After it has performed, however, I have to fine-tune the results with **Clone Stamp** or **Healing Brush** to tidy up some of Elements' visual mistakes. That said, the **Content-aware Move tool** is not a bad feature with which to recompose certain types of images, especially if it's applied to a photo where there's room for the moving and blending process to actually manoeuvre.

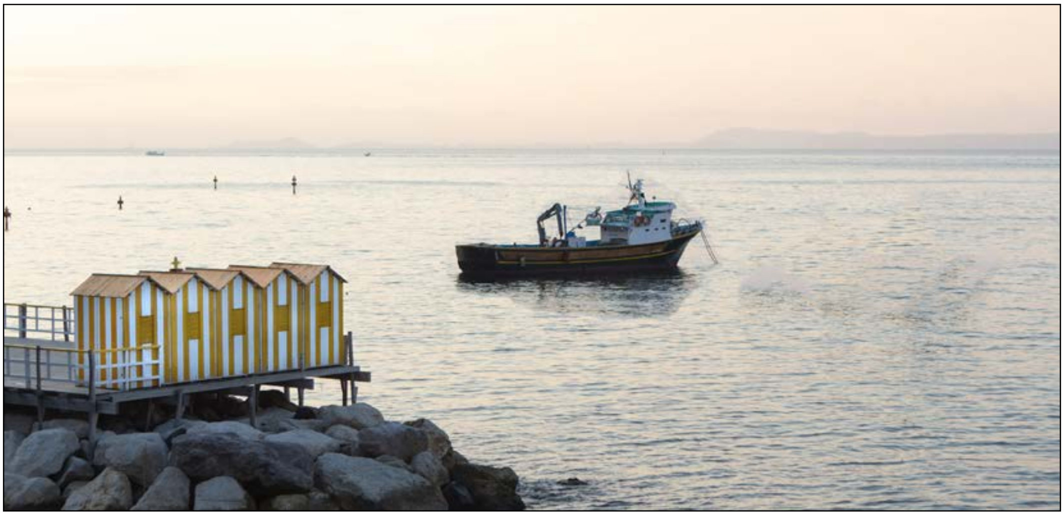


The sample image demonstrates this feature nicely because the object I want to move (the fishing boat) has plenty of (reasonably) uniform space around it (the ocean), which should make it easier for this tool to cover up the area once occupied by the boat.



Step one: Start by drawing a simple line around the object you want to move. It doesn't have to be accurate, but be careful not to include any of the object you are trying to shift (in this case, the fishing boat). Because the healing brush works by assessing the brightness and texture in the pixels around the target and source locations, it's important to work with a **simple image** rather than one that's busy.

Step two: Drag the object to its new location, and once you're happy with its position, click the green check mark.

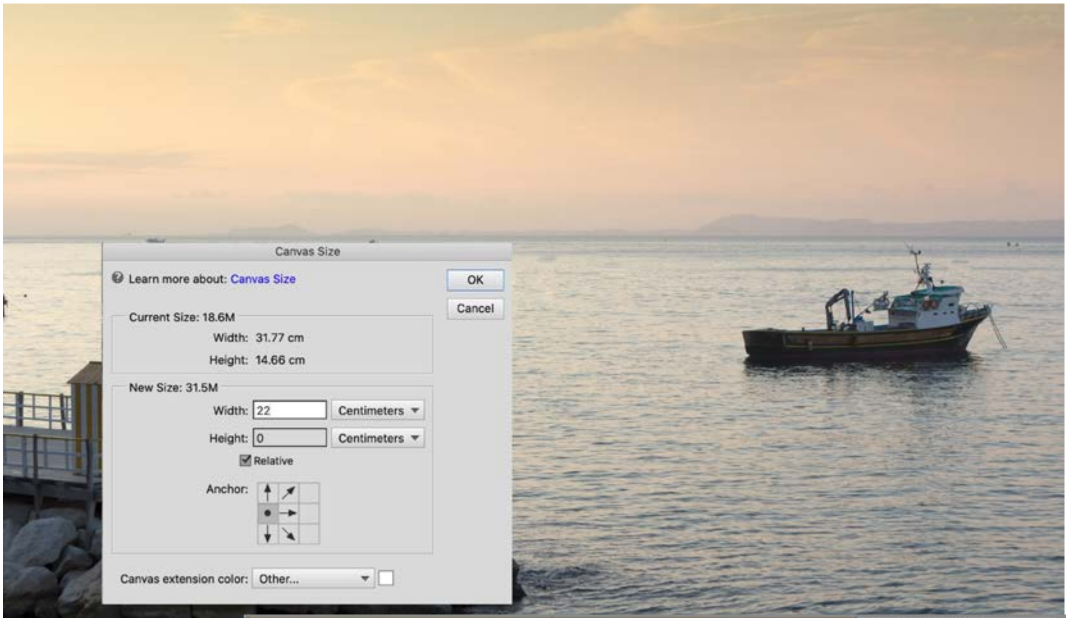


Finished: You can see the result in this screenshot. Although there are some slightly uneven textures in the ocean where the boat once was, the result is acceptable (especially from an automated action). Retouching with the **Spot Healing Brush** will help to further smooth the tones.

Recompose tool

Another re-composition helper is the **Recompose tool**. Personally, I think its results can be very hit and miss, almost as if Adobe has bitten off more than it can chew.

We all have snaps in our libraries where we might wish the composition to be slightly different – people a bit closer to each other, landscapes a bit wider, or formats recomposed to a square shape, for example. The **Recompose** tool sets out to provide the solutions to these problems.



Canvas Size

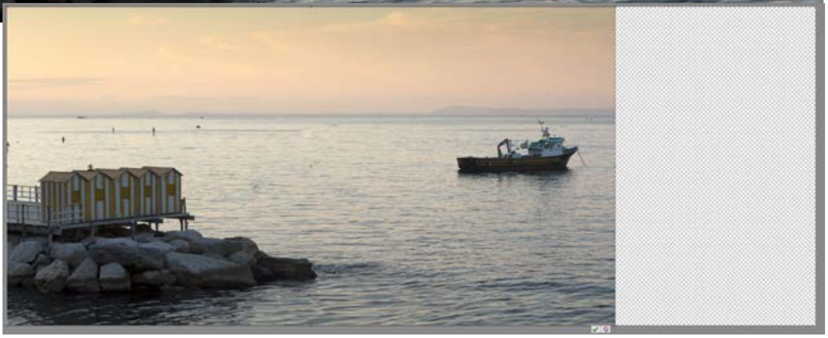
Learn more about: Canvas Size

Current Size: 18.6M
Width: 31.77 cm
Height: 14.66 cm

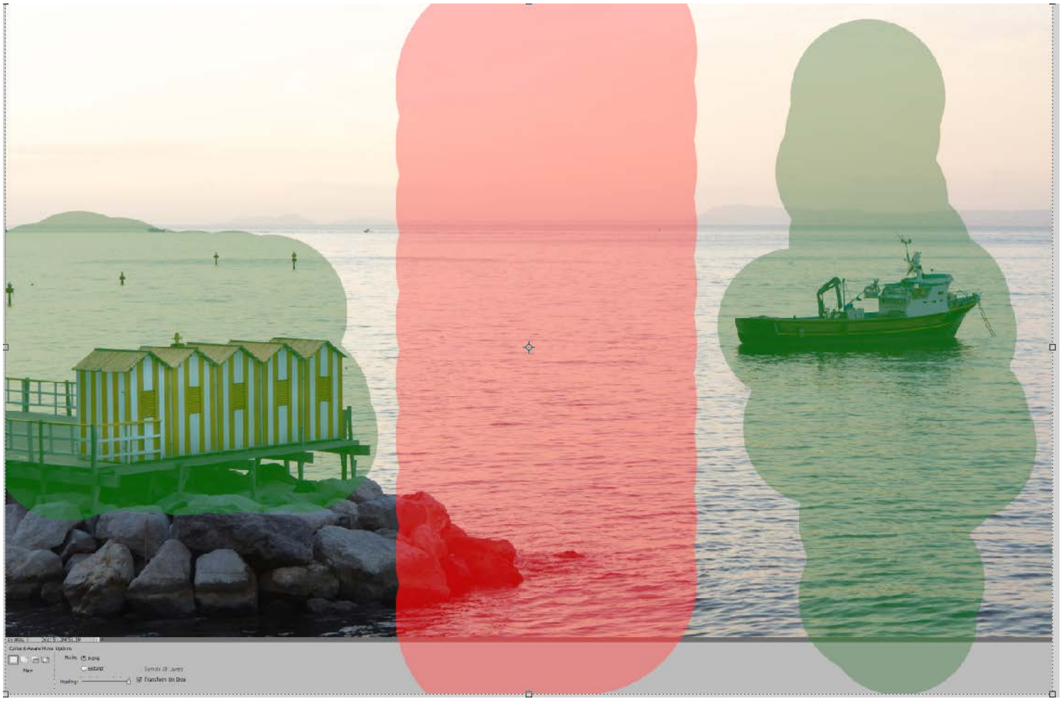
New Size: 31.5M
Width: 22 Centimeters
Height: 0 Centimeters
☑ Relative

Anchor:

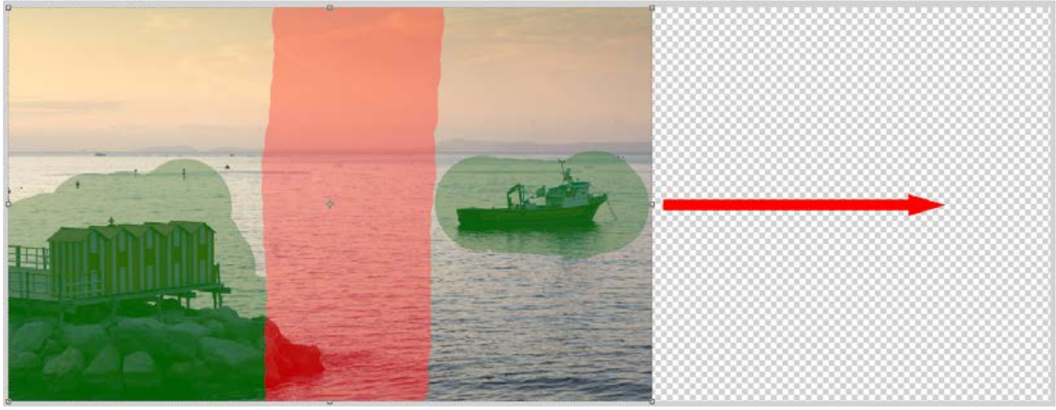
Canvas extension color: Other...



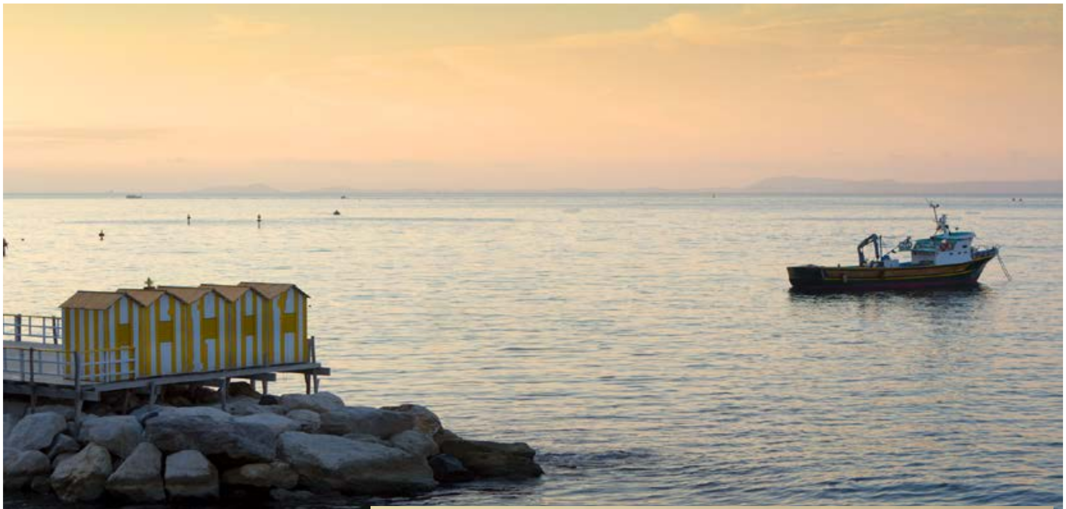
Main image, above:
I like the openness in this scene, but want to stretch it further to give the image more of a panorama *look*.
To achieve this, I need to add more to the right-hand side of the canvas using the **Canvas Size** feature (inset panel). I wasn't 100% sure how much extra real estate I was going to need, so I added a lot—if it adds too much, it's easy enough to crop any surplus off later. The new real estate appears as a checkerboard pattern—indicating that although that's now the new document size, it doesn't contain any pixels.



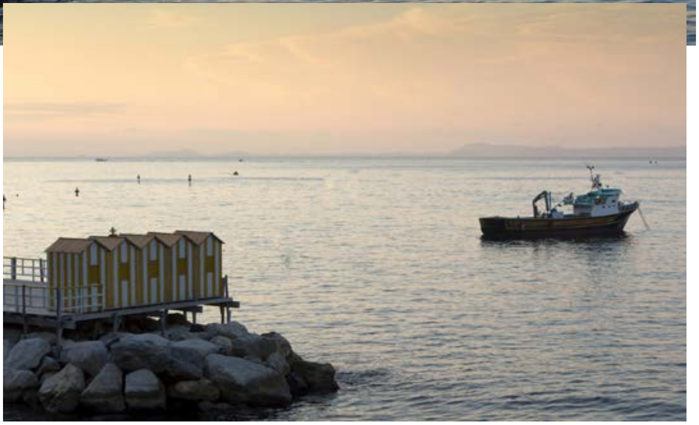
Step one: Note that there are two types of brush available: green and red. The green paintbrush is for preserving the shape of objects, while the red brush indicates that the selected pixels can be deleted. As you might deduce here, by using a big brush, you can paint over the objects in an image you want to keep and remove. If you make a mistake, use each brush's **Eraser** tool to fix the mask (a larger-sized brush makes the whole process a lot faster).

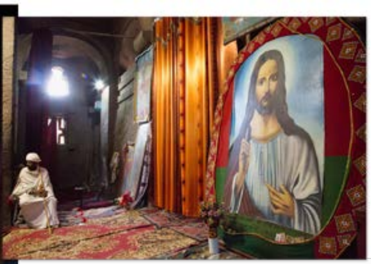


Step two: Once the regions are set, carefully grab one of the "handles"—in this example, it was the center handle on the right-hand edge that was dragged to the right in order to stretch the image to a wide panorama format (sometimes this "handle" is hard to see).



Final result: As you can see in the screenshot above, the stretched result is quite subtle. Although the final result wasn't quite as wide as I had originally hoped, if the image had been dragged any further to the right, the scene would have become distorted—compare this with the original 4:3 format image, on the right.



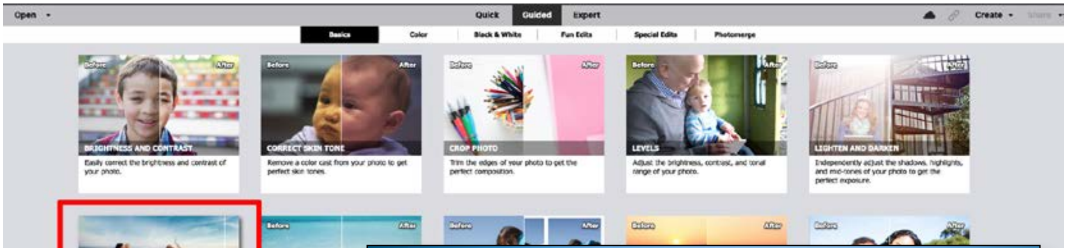


Shooting tip:

Most of us shoot landscape format images—it's just easier to hold the camera in that position. I can guarantee, if you check your image library, 80% of your shots will be horizontal—maybe more. One of the best compositional tips I can pass on is this: when you shoot a frame, turn the camera through 90 degrees and shoot a different orientation. Make this your shooting technique—it will ensure that, even if you end up throwing half your shots away because they don't work compositionally, at least you'll have that choice.

Move & Scale Object

It's not often that you get to experience a complex, automated photo editing feature that's really exciting—but this is one of those times. In **Guided Edit** mode, under **Basics**, you'll find **Move and Scale Object**.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
Basics
Color
Black & White
Fun Edits
Special Edits
Photomerge
Before
After
BRIGHTNESS AND CONTRAST
CORRECT SKIN TONE
CROP PHOTO
LEVELS
LIGHTEN AND DARKEN
MOVE & SCALE OBJECT
OBJECT REMOVAL

Easily correct the brightness and contrast of your photo.

Remove a color cast from your photo to get perfect skin tones.

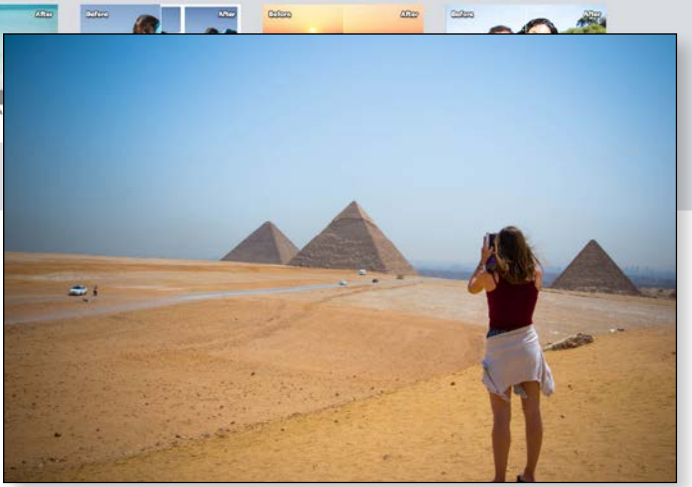
Trim the edges of your photo to get the perfect composition.

Adjust the brightness, contrast, and tonal range of your photo.

Independently adjust the shadows, highlights, and mid-tones of your photo to get the perfect exposure.

Easily select an object and change its position, size, and more.

Make unwanted objects vanish



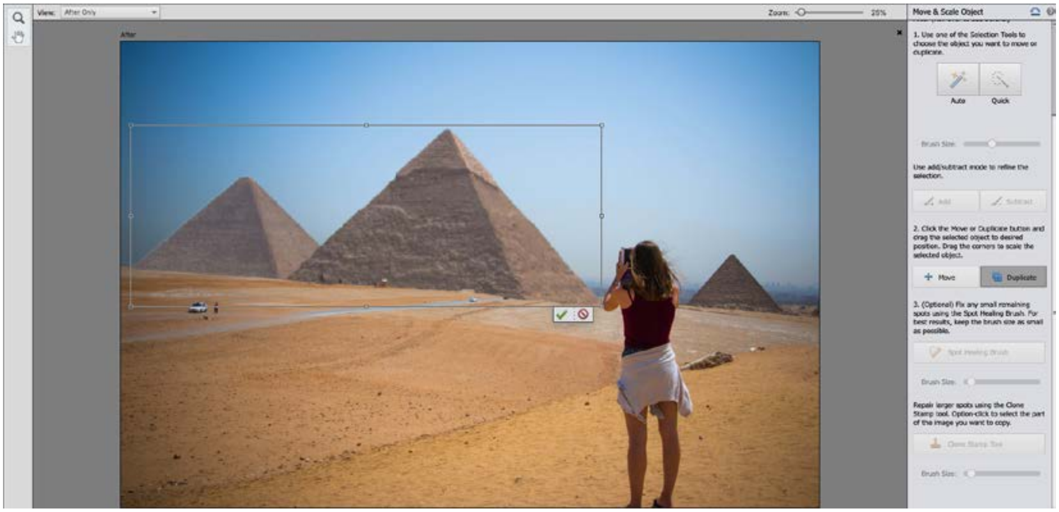
As the somewhat ambitious name might suggest, this is a copy and paste operation on steroids. But in my experience it only really works effectively on simple images—the process of identifying the main subject and selecting it cleanly using one of two selection tools, then copy-and-pasting it elsewhere in the image, is both a complex operation and one that's fraught with potential editing problems. That said, I chose this simple shot of a woman photographing the pyramids in Egypt as an example. This feature is easy to use—just follow the onscreen instructions!

Photo manipulation woes

In 1982 the **National Geographic Magazine** got into hot water—the editors liked a proposed cover shot, but the pyramids were not in the right position for a vertical cover. So the pyramids were moved. This caused quite a sensation among many purists, not to mention the photographer, who considered any pictorial meddling to be a bad idea.

Nowadays the publication has strict rules about the degree of photo editing that can be applied to any story published. These rules do not apply you users of Elements!

(See more here: https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2016/07/editors-note-images-and-ethics/)


View: After Only
Zoom: 25%
After
Move & Scale Object
Auto
Quick
Brush Size:
Add
Subtract
Move
Duplicate
Spot Healing Brush
Brush Size:
Clone Stamp Tool
Brush Size:

1. Use one of the Selection Tools to choose the object you want to move or duplicate.

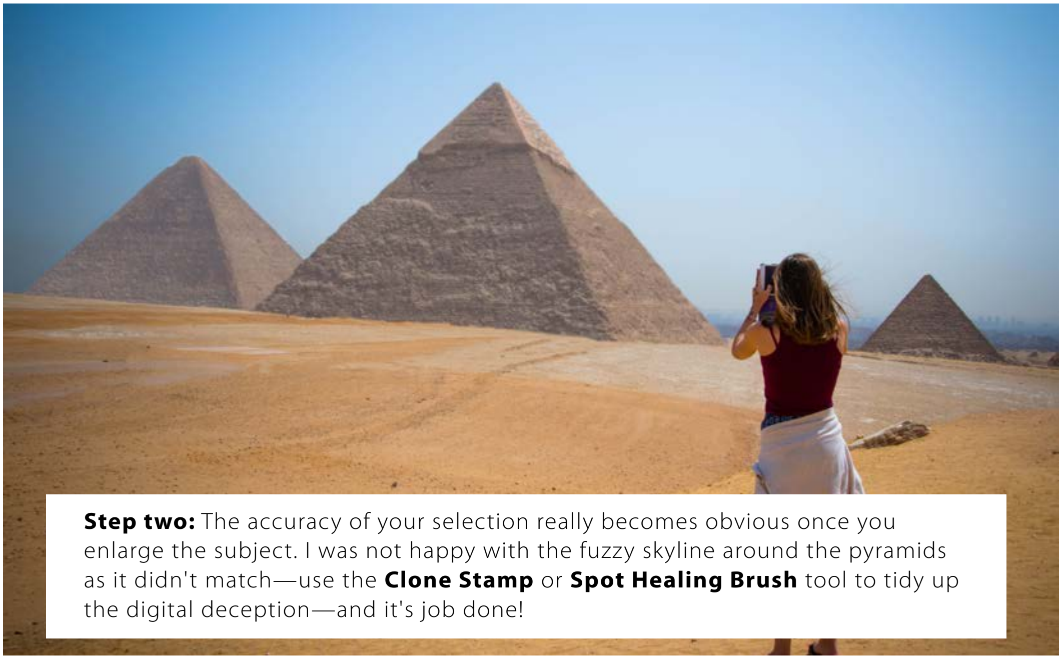
Use add/subtract mode to refine the selection.

2. Click the Move or Duplicate button and drag the selected object to desired position. Drag the corners to scale the selected object.

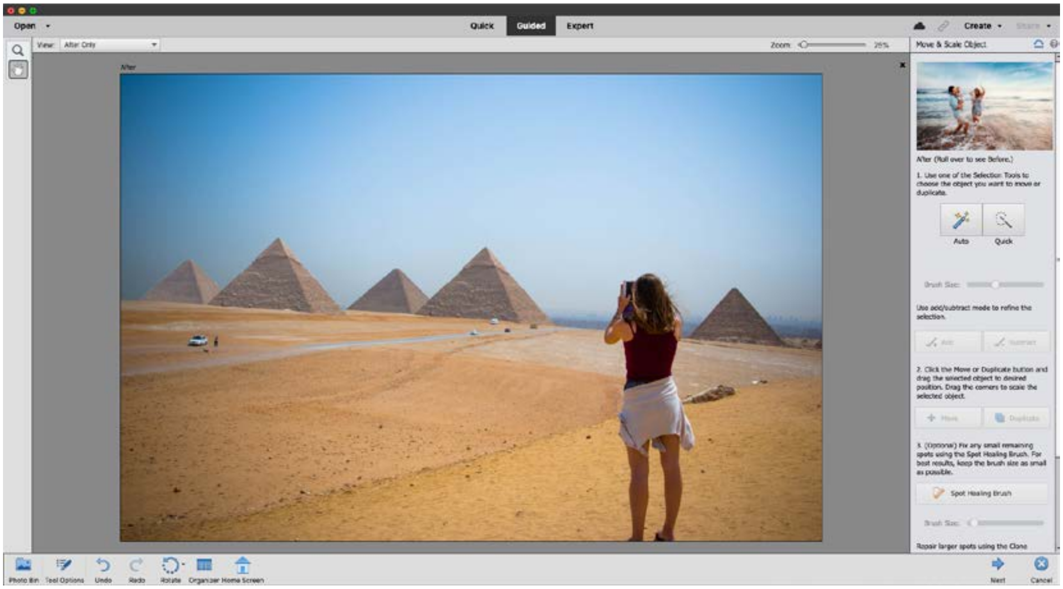
3. (Optional) Fix any small remaining spots using the Spot Healing Brush. For best results, keep the brush size as small as possible.

Repair larger spots using the Clone Stamp tool. Option-click to select the part of the image you want to copy.

Step one: The feature offers two selection tools: **Auto Select** and the **Quick Selection** brush. I used the latter as I find it easier to control. If your image subject is not contrasty, clean selections can be tricky. As it was, the finished selection included some blue sky and a vehicle that was parked in front of the pyramid. I chose **Move**, which takes the selection, copies the content, moves it, then pastes it back into the file. Grab a corner handle to drag it out to go larger. (Because it is larger but still over the original, you won't see how good or bad the auto healing is underneath the new layer).



Step two: The accuracy of your selection really becomes obvious once you enlarge the subject. I was not happy with the fuzzy skyline around the pyramids as it didn't match—use the **Clone Stamp** or **Spot Healing Brush** tool to tidy up the digital deception—and it's job done!



Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: After Only
Zoom: 25%
Move & Scale Object
After
Auto
Quick
Brush Size:
Add
Subtract
Move
Duplicate
Spot Healing Brush
Brush Size:
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Use one of the Selection Tools to choose the object you want to move or duplicate.

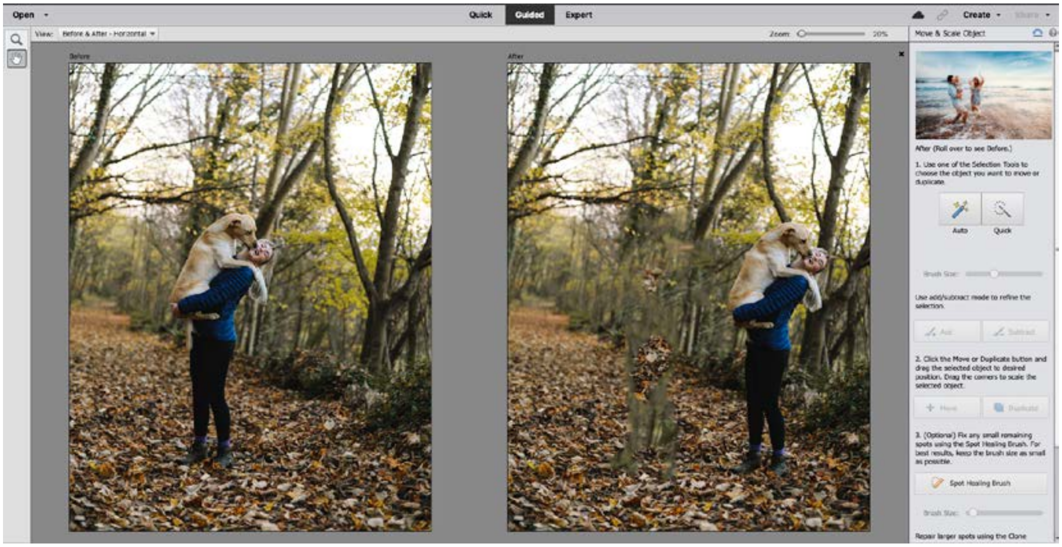
Use add/subtract mode to refine the selection.

2. Click the Move or Duplicate button and drag the selected object to desired position. Drag the corners to scale the selected object.

3. (Optional) Fix any small remaining spots using the Spot Healing Brush. For best results, keep the brush size as small as possible.

Repair larger spots using the Clone

Duplicate option: Editors at **National Geographic** will be running for cover when they see this. As an automated tool, this is an excellent feature, making it so easy to perform a complex selection, copy, and paste operation with a high probability of success.



Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 20%
Move & Scale Object
Before
After
Auto
Quick
Brush Size:
Add
Subtract
Move
Duplicate
Spot Healing Brush
Brush Size:

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Use one of the Selection Tools to choose the object you want to move or duplicate.

Use add/subtract mode to refine the selection.

2. Click the Move or Duplicate button and drag the selected object to desired position. Drag the corners to scale the selected object.

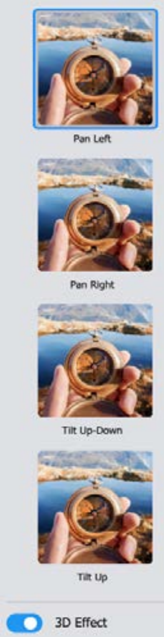
3. (Optional) Fix any small remaining spots using the Spot Healing Brush. For best results, keep the brush size as small as possible.

Repair larger spots using the Clone

Busy pictures: In this shot, I tried to select and move the woman holding the dog. The selection result, on the right, was surprisingly good considering that it's such a complex image. But once moved, the automatic healing cover-up process left a lot of smudgy-looking errors. You can use the **Clone Stamp** or the **Healing** brushes to fix such errors, but in this example, it would take too long to get it just right.

Moving Photos

In **Adobe Photoshop Elements 2021**, you'll find a few neat developments—many are connected with Adobe's continued development of artificial intelligence or **AI**. This is there to make the often-complex retouching processes appear easier to control—and in the case of the **Object Removal**, **Adjust Facial Features**, **Open Closed Eyes**, and the **Move and Scale Object** features, it works pretty well. Here's another one that I shall try to illustrate here, even though the end product is a video. **Moving Photos** has bridged the gap between stills and moving pictures by producing this cool GIF maker.

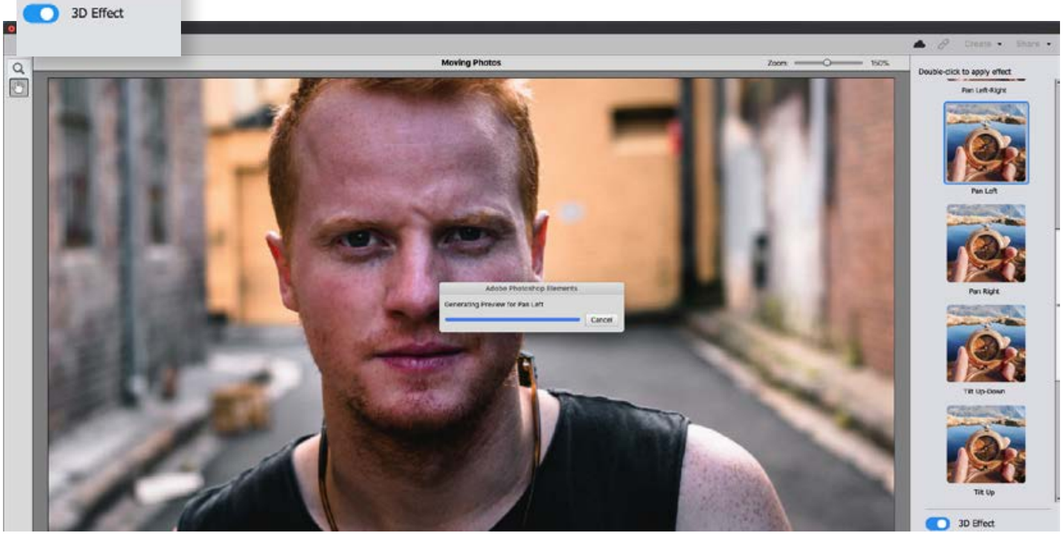


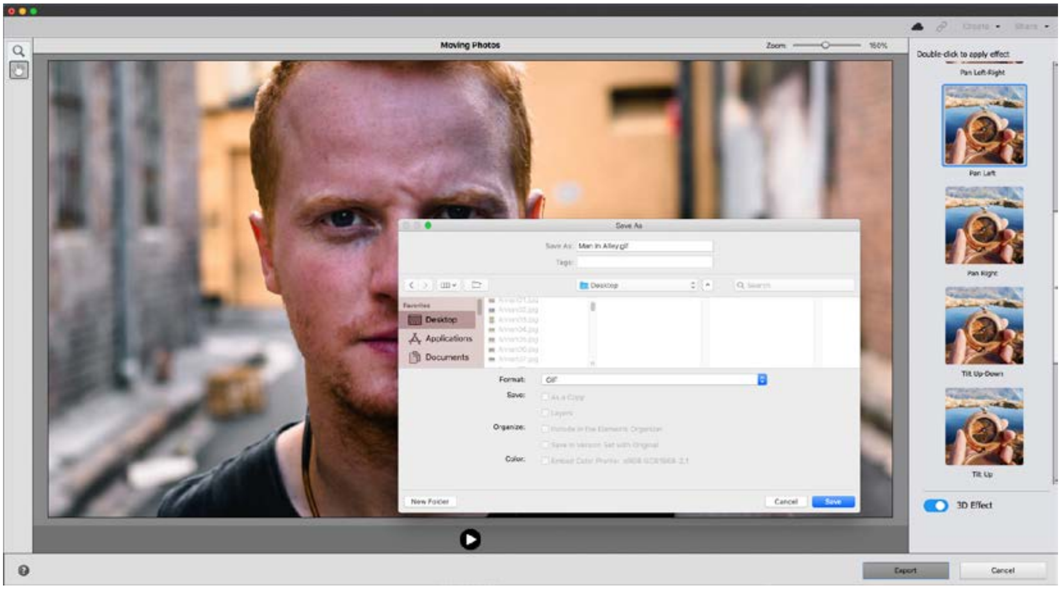
Find a picture with a strong subject, open it in the **Moving Photos** feature (**Enhance>Moving Photos**), double-click the type of animation from the menu (inset, on the left), and sit back for Adobe to do its magic. And magic it is.

We have all seen the effect used in advertising campaigns and in some horror film genres in the eighties—where the subject stays relatively static, while the background shifts—forward or backward, to the left or to the right—now we can do it using our own images!

The process can be recorded as a **2D effect**—which means the entire picture zooms or pans the scene (this is also called the **Ken Burns effect**, after the documentary film maker who used it so effectively that it was named after him).

If the switch is flipped to **3D**, the utility scans the image, selects what it perceives to be the subject, then animates the rest of the file to create the Burns effect. If you study the edges of the subject, you can see where the selection has been made, but I have to admit, it's pretty good—plus of course, in an animated clip, the cool effect overrides any slight masking inconsistency.

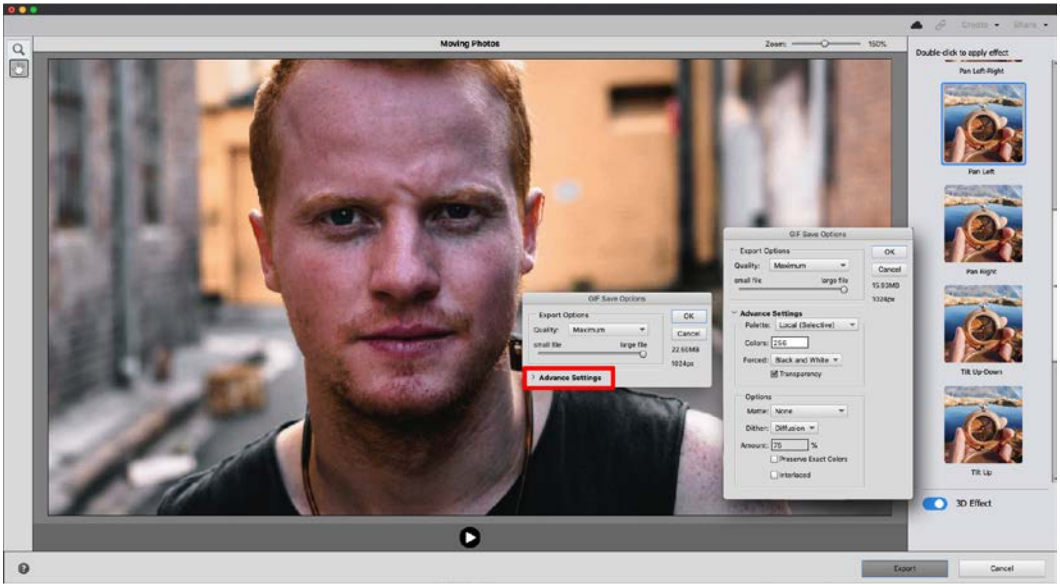

Adobe Photoshop Elements
Generating Preview for Pan Left


Moving Photos
Zoom:
150%
Double-click to apply effect
Pan Left-Right
Pan Left
Pan Right
Tilt Up-Down
Tilt Up
3D Effect
Save As
Desktop
Applications
Documents
New Folder
Cancel
Save
Export
Cancel

Save As: Man In Alley.gif

Format: GIF

Step one: Find an image, open it, and select **Moving Photos** (**Quick/ Expert>Enhance>Moving Photos**).
Step two: Choose from one of the 22 animations (11 in 2D, 11 in 3D). Double-click the icon and wait.
Step three: Click **Export**, if happy with the result, and choose where it's saved to.


Moving Photos
Zoom:
150%
Double-click to apply effect
Pan Left-Right
Pan Left
Pan Right
Tilt Up-Down
Tilt Up
3D Effect
GIF Save Options
Export Options
OK
Cancel
small file
large file
Advance Settings
Options
Export
Cancel

Quality: Maximum
22.60MB
1024px

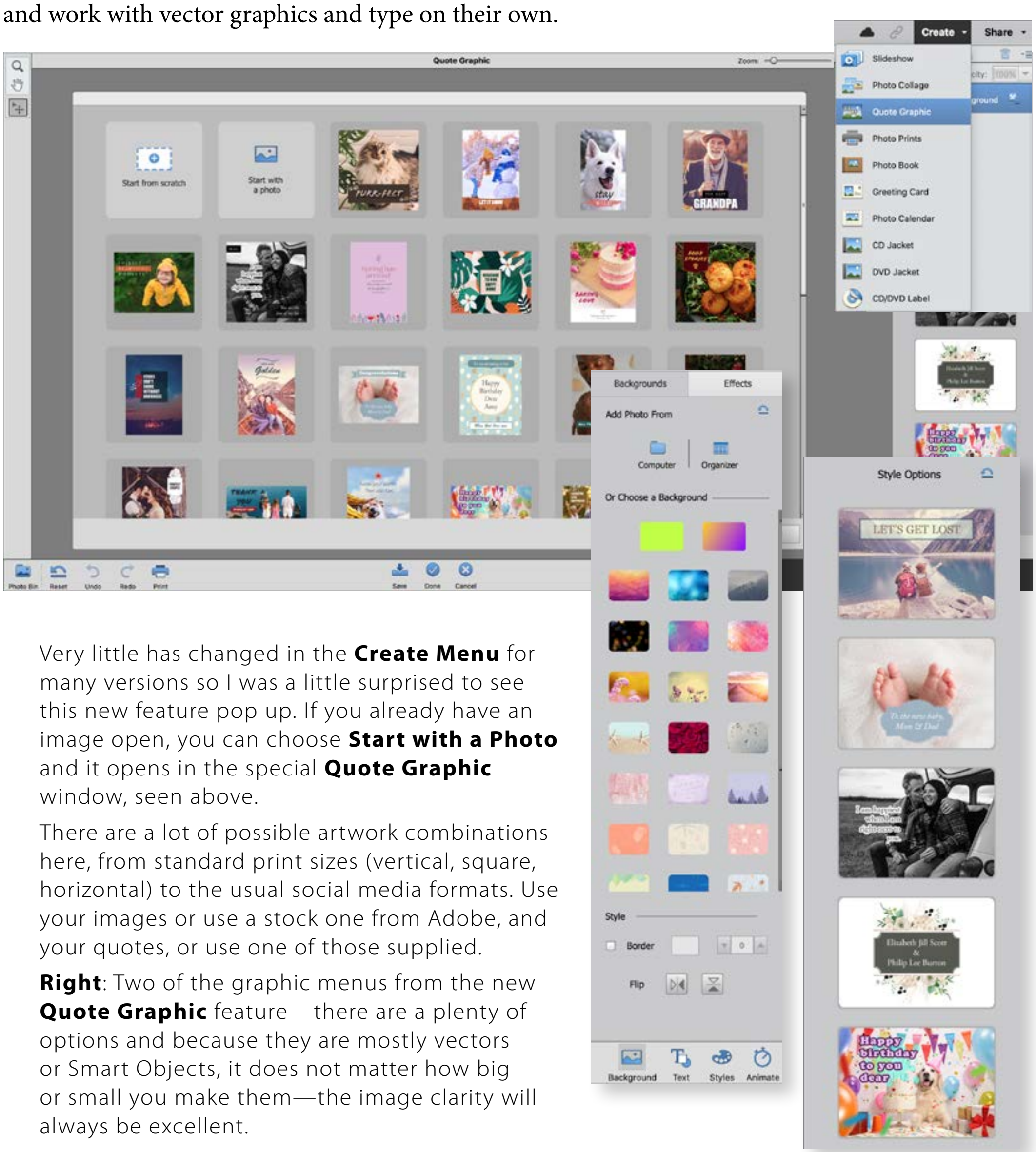
Quality: Maximum
15.93MB
1024px
Palette: Local (Selective)
Colors: 256
Forced: Black and White
☑ Transparency
Matte: None
Dither: Diffusion
Amount: 75 %
☐ Preserve Exact Colors
☐ Interlaced

Step four: The next screen allows you to choose the **GIF quality**—plus, if you click **Advanced Settings** (circled), you can get into additional quality settings and file size output—important if this is destined for the web.

Quote Graphic

One feature I never expected to appear in this application is this one: **Quote Graphic**—but then again, it's appropriate because I know that the type tool is tricky at the best of times and any attempt at making its operation easier to digest would be more than welcome.

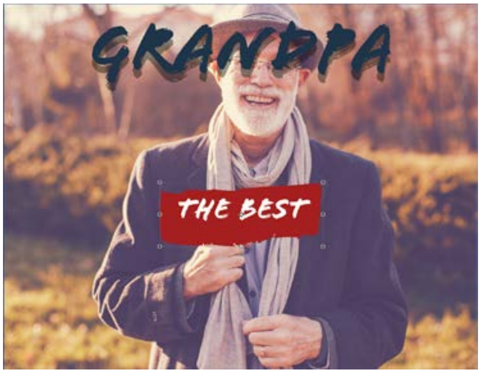
The idea behind this new feature is to make the job of working with text a little easier. You can work this a couple of ways: choose an image and add the text and graphics to that, or start from scratch and work with vector graphics and type on their own.


Create
Share
Slideshow
Photo Collage
Quote Graphic
Photo Prints
Photo Book
Greeting Card
Photo Calendar
CD Jacket
DVD Jacket
CD/DVD Label
Quote Graphic
Zoom:
Start from scratch
Start with a photo
Photo Bin
Reset
Undo
Redo
Print
Save
Done
Cancel
Backgrounds
Effects
Add Photo From
Computer
Organizer
Or Choose a Background
Style
Border
Flip
Background
Text
Styles
Animate
Style Options
LET'S GET LOST

Very little has changed in the **Create Menu** for many versions so I was a little surprised to see this new feature pop up. If you already have an image open, you can choose **Start with a Photo** and it opens in the special **Quote Graphic** window, seen above.

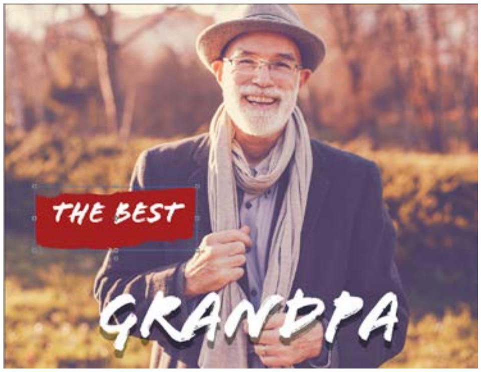
There are a lot of possible artwork combinations here, from standard print sizes (vertical, square, horizontal) to the usual social media formats. Use your images or use a stock one from Adobe, and your quotes, or use one of those supplied.

Right: Two of the graphic menus from the new **Quote Graphic** feature—there are a plenty of options and because they are mostly vectors or Smart Objects, it does not matter how big or small you make them—the image clarity will always be excellent.

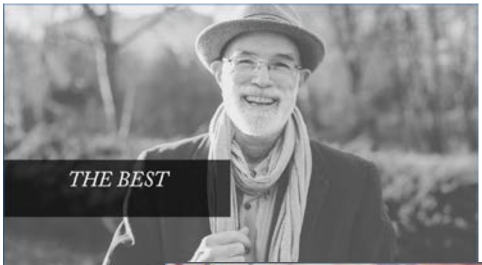


Step one, left: I chose one of the supplied Adobe stock shots and got this at my first attempt. It's a good example because, if this were a normal exercise using the **Type** Tool, correcting this layout mess would be tricky unless you'd had some prior experience. However, as you can see in this frame, the red-painted text box has *corner handles*. This means I can drag any corner to make it larger or smaller. Easy.

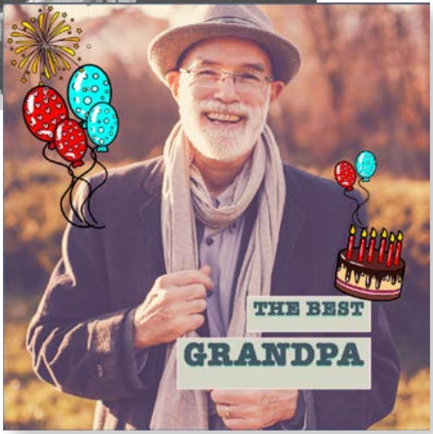
Step two: As with all Elements transformations, once something has been re-sized, you need to hit the green **OK** button attached to the object that has been changed before proceeding. Everything in these little compositions can be changed—from text boxes to type styles, color, drop shadow color, point size, and more.



Step three (left): I dragged the graphic boxes one at a time around the frame to get better text positioning. If you change your mind and choose another graphic, it might automatically fit the scene, or you might have to jiggle it a bit, to get it positioned again. It's an easy, no-hassle process.



Step four: Interestingly, most of the graphics have a color overlay so the upper examples have a peachy color while the lower one was monochrome. Again, you have no say in this, it just happens because that's the style Adobe presents. If you want it to look different, you'd have to edit it in **Expert** mode and start **Quote Graphic** again.



Step five: Not surprisingly, all of Elements' (many) graphics and clip art files can also be brought into play.

Click to automatically drop one of these files directly from menu into the main image, then click-drag to resize and reposition.

This is one for the kids.

Convert to Black and White

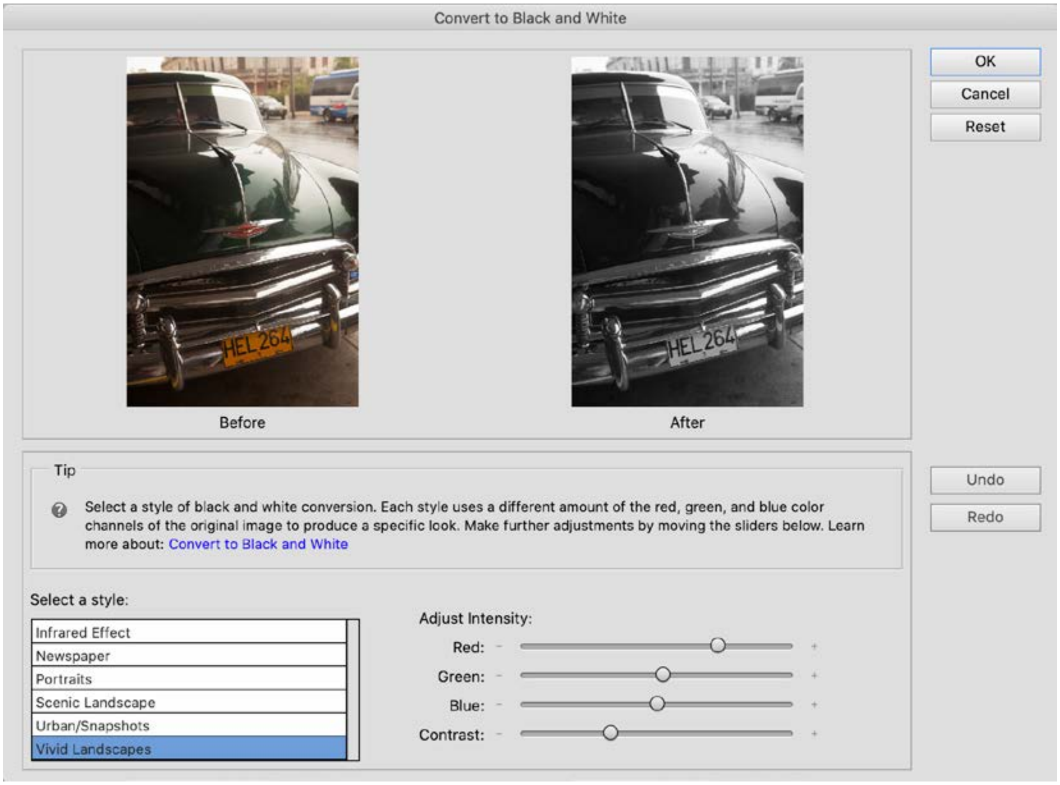
The medium of back and white is favored by a lot of photographers – it evokes feelings of antiquity, style, and artiness in many different scenarios. The trouble is, if you ask a bunch of photographers how to convert a file into black and white, they'll come up with multiple different ways of doing it – some good, some great, some complex.

Elements makes the conversion process a little easier with it's own **Convert to Black and White** tool. Here's how it works:

Step one: Choose the **Convert to Black and White** tool (*Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *B* or **Enhance>Convert to Black and White**).

Step two: The **Convert** window opens and the image in the main edit space automatically converts into one of the black-and-white ***recipes*** on offer. With the introduction of higher resolution monitors, the fixed-shape preview before and after windows are less relevant than the main image behind it.

Step three: Choose from one of the preset recipes on offer: **Infrared effect**, **Newspaper**, **Portraits**, **Scenic Landscape**, **Urban Snapshots**, or **Vivid Landscapes**.



Select a style of black and white conversion. Each style uses a different amount of the red, green, and blue color channels of the original image to produce a specific look. Make further adjustments by moving the sliders below. Learn more about: Convert to Black and White

Select a style:

- Infrared Effect
- Newspaper
- Portraits
- Scenic Landscape
- Urban/Snapshots
- Vivid Landscapes

Adjust Intensity:

Step four (above): Adjust the **intensity** of the black, white, and mid-tones using the sliders to the right of the recipes.

Step five: When satisfied, click **OK** and save the file.

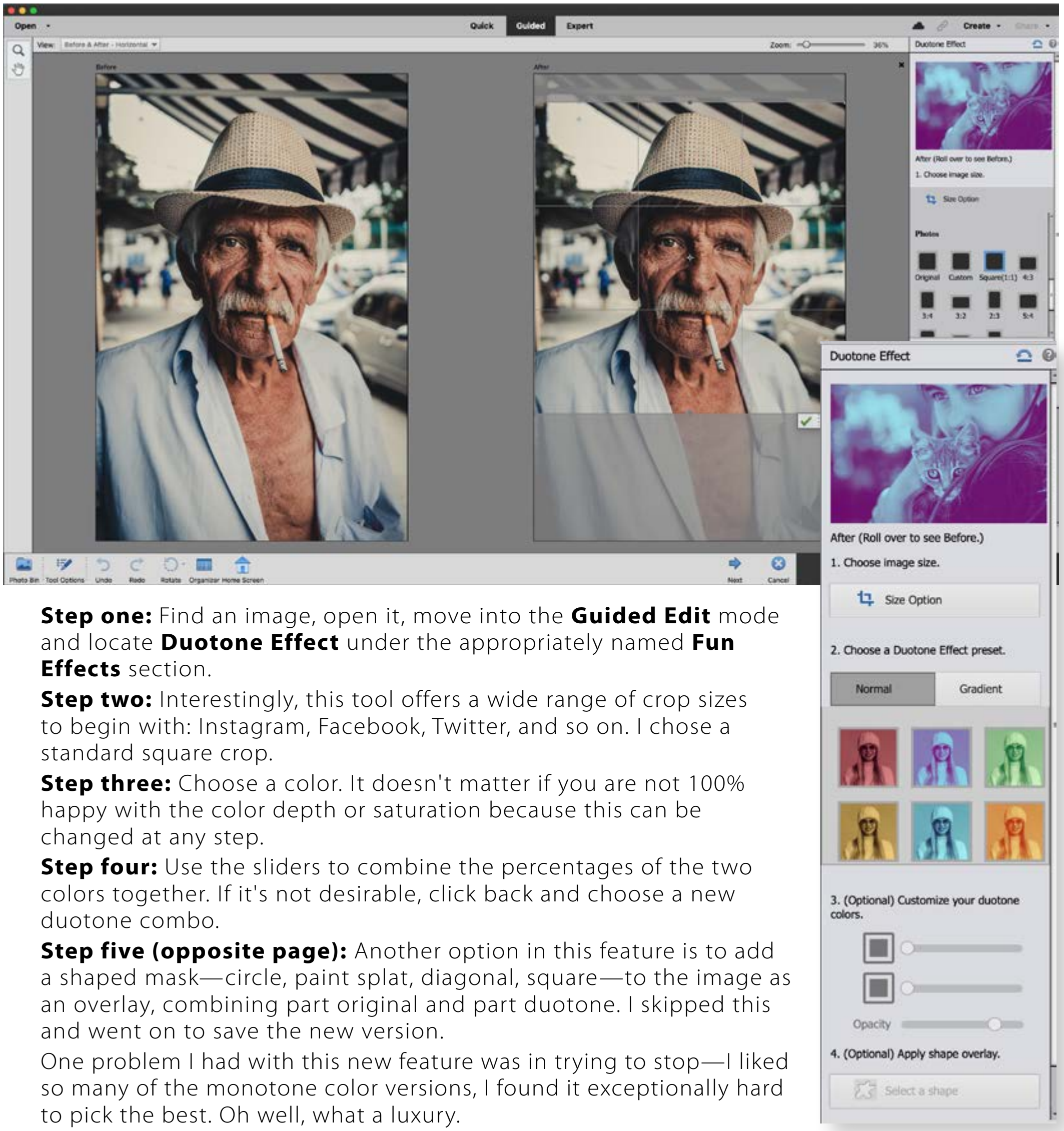
When it comes to using this specific tool, I prefer to use the least contrasty conversion first (for me, this is usually **Urban Landscape**), click **OK**, then finish editing the contrast using **Levels**. Everyone has their own *best* way to make a black-and-white shot pop off the page.

Seven other black and white conversion techniques to try:

- In the **Hue/Saturation** tool, set the **Saturation** slider to **-100**.
- Convert the color mode from **RGB** to **Grayscale**. (**Image>Mode**>**Grayscale**).
- Use the **Remove Color** tool (**Enhance**>**Adjust Color>Remove Color**, or *Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + U*).
- Use the **Black & White Effects** thumbnail in **Quick Edit** mode.
- Use the **Black and White Conversion** tool in **Guided Edit** mode.
- Use the **Monotone Color** menu from the **Expert>Effects** panel.
- Use a **Hue/Saturation** adjustment layer.

Duotone Effect

A duotone is a black-and-white image with an extra color added for effect. It's a feature that has been in Adobe Photoshop CC for many, many, years. In fact, duotones have been popular with photographers when publishing high-end books of mostly black-and-white images. The Italian printing industry has one of the best reputations for producing such books, although now you can make your own with Elements. But this feature doesn't just stop at converting to black and white then adding color (which I guess is why it's called the Duotone Effect and not just "duotone"). You can apply a gradient to the duotone effect, customize the color content of the duotone—in fact, you can have a lot of fun creating color images like never before.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 36%
Before
After
Duotone Effect
Size Option
Photos
Original
Custom
Square(1:1)
4:3
3:4
3:2
2:3
5:4
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel
Normal
Gradient
Opacity
Select a shape

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Choose image size.

2. Choose a Duotone Effect preset.

3. (Optional) Customize your duotone colors.

4. (Optional) Apply shape overlay.

Step one: Find an image, open it, move into the **Guided Edit** mode and locate **Duotone Effect** under the appropriately named **Fun Effects** section.

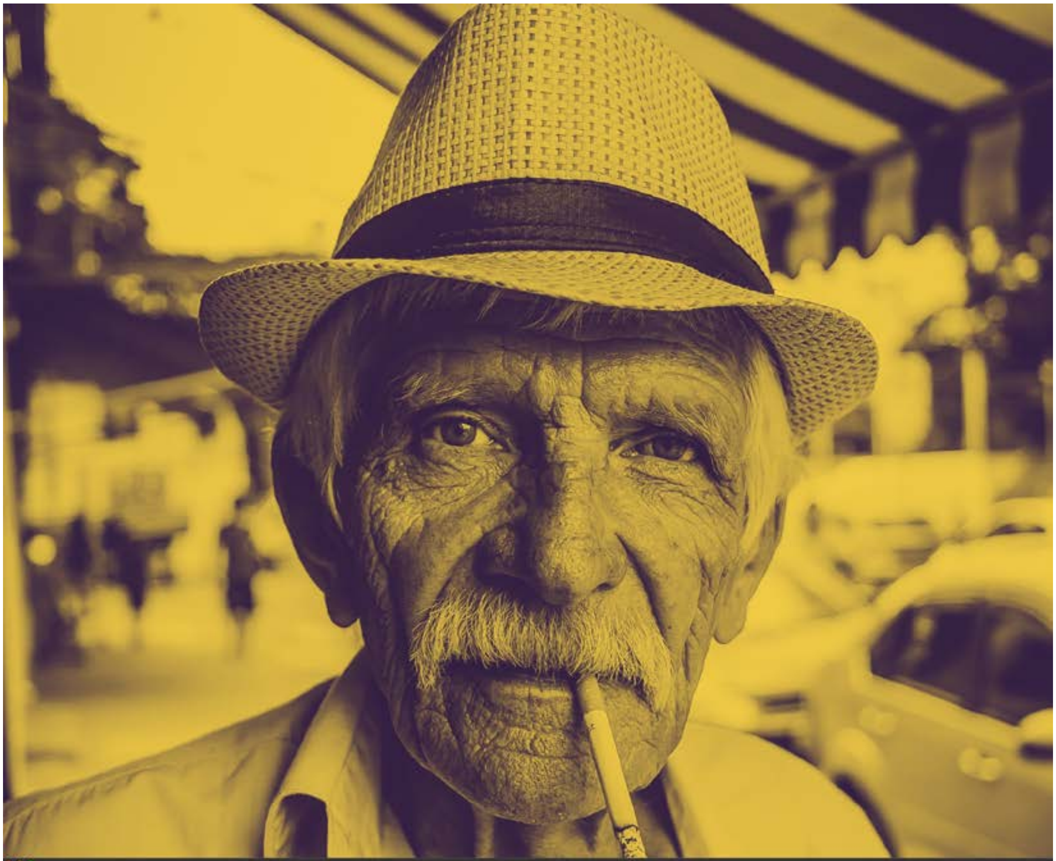
Step two: Interestingly, this tool offers a wide range of crop sizes to begin with: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and so on. I chose a standard square crop.

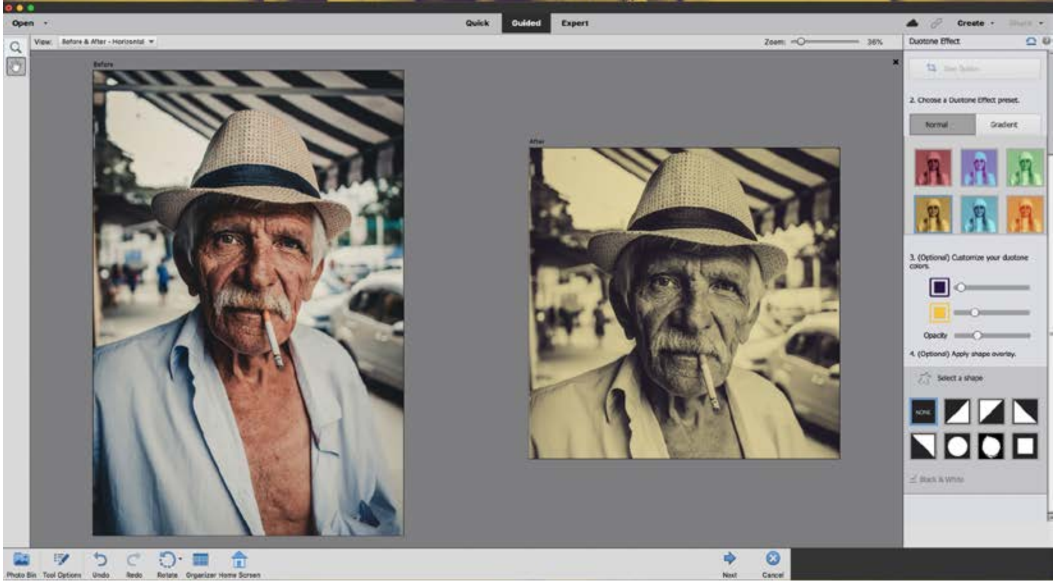
Step three: Choose a color. It doesn't matter if you are not 100% happy with the color depth or saturation because this can be changed at any step.

Step four: Use the sliders to combine the percentages of the two colors together. If it's not desirable, click back and choose a new duotone combo.

Step five (opposite page): Another option in this feature is to add a shaped mask—circle, paint splat, diagonal, square—to the image as an overlay, combining part original and part duotone. I skipped this and went on to save the new version.

One problem I had with this new feature was in trying to stop—I liked so many of the monotone color versions, I found it exceptionally hard to pick the best. Oh well, what a luxury.

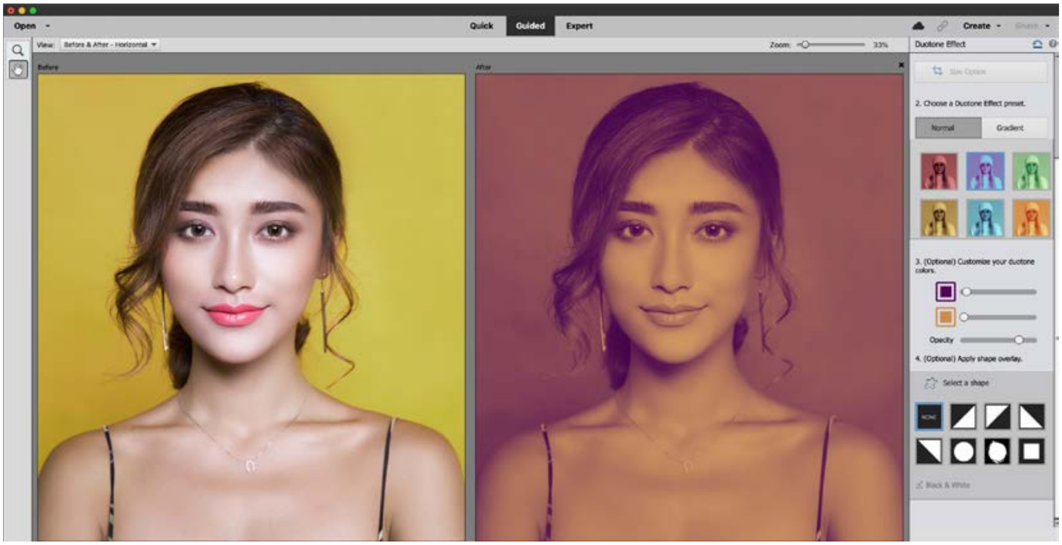



Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 36%
Before
After
Duotone Effect
Normal
Gradient
Opacity
Select a shape
NONE
Black & White
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

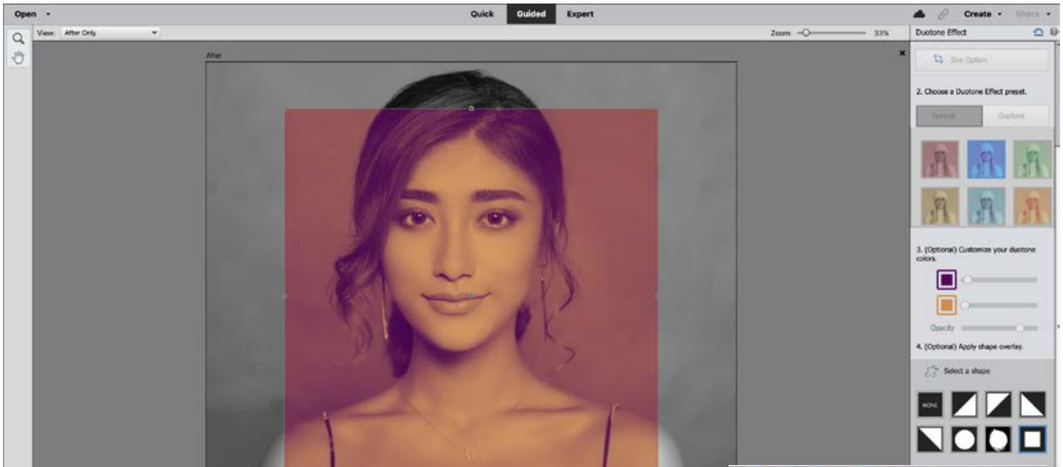
2. Choose a Duotone Effect preset.

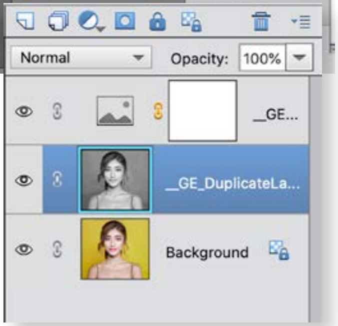
3. (Optional) Customize your duotone colors.

4. (Optional) Apply shape overlay.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 33%
Before
After
Duotone Effect
Size Options
2. Choose a Duotone Effect preset.
Normal
Gradient
3. (Optional) Customize your duotone colors.
Opacity
4. (Optional) Apply shape overlay.
Select a shape
NONE
Black & White

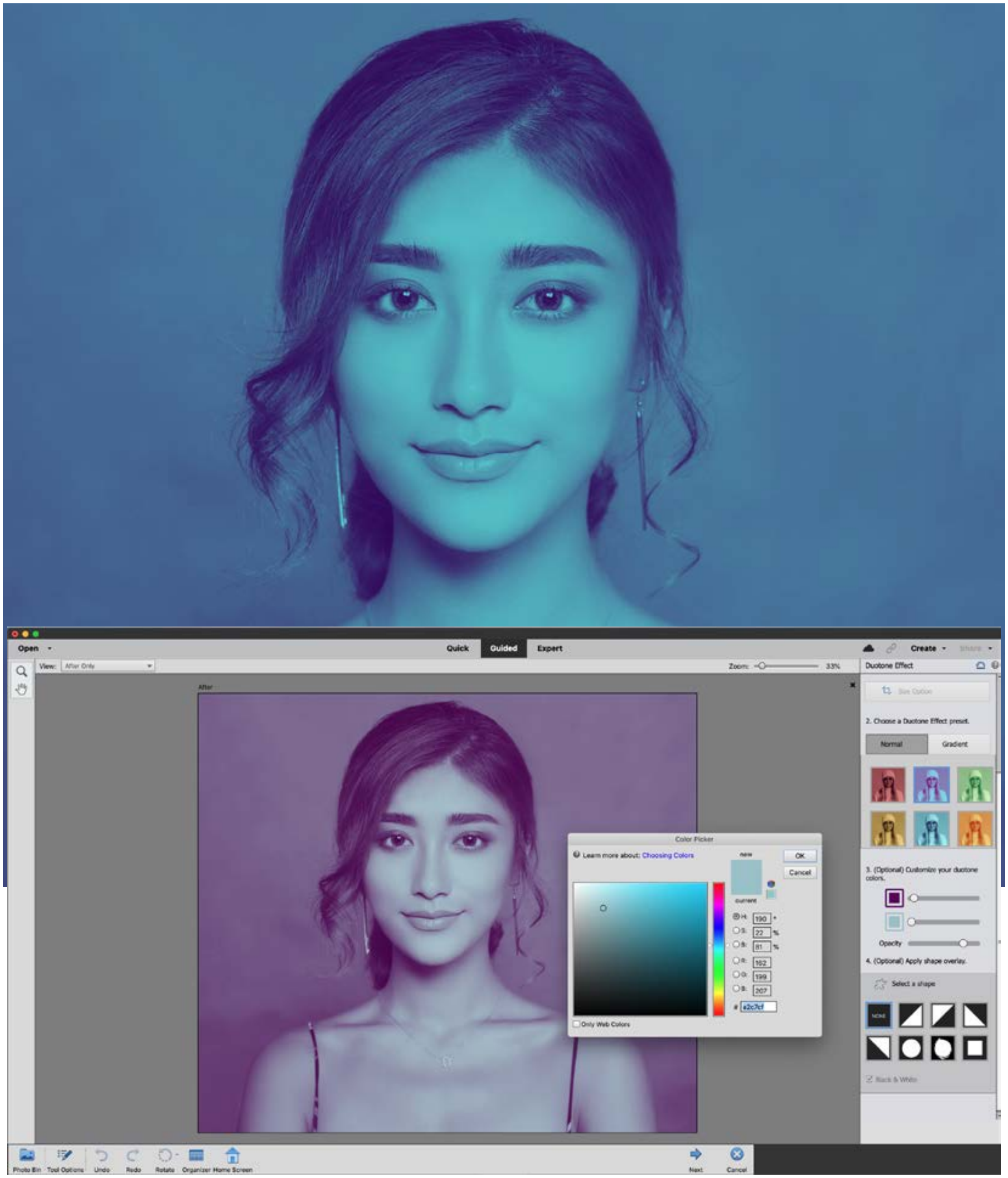
Duotone example #2: Here's another example, a completely different type of portrait that's already been heavily edited. However, a single color duotone works very well on this image.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: After Only
Zoom: 33%
After
Duotone Effect
Size Options
2. Choose a Duotone Effect preset.
Normal
Gradient
3. (Optional) Customize your duotone colors.
Opacity
4. (Optional) Apply shape overlay.
Select a shape
NONE


Normal
Opacity: 100%
_GE...
_GE_DuplicateLa...
Background

Above: As mentioned on the previous page, another aspect of this new feature is the **overlay**—I chose the square and realized that it landed across the model's forehead! Not a good look—but if you use the **Move** tool, the overlay can be shifted and re-sized anywhere inside the main frame area.

Inset: This is the layer stack showing the complicated automated processes that go on in the background during the creation of a duotone.

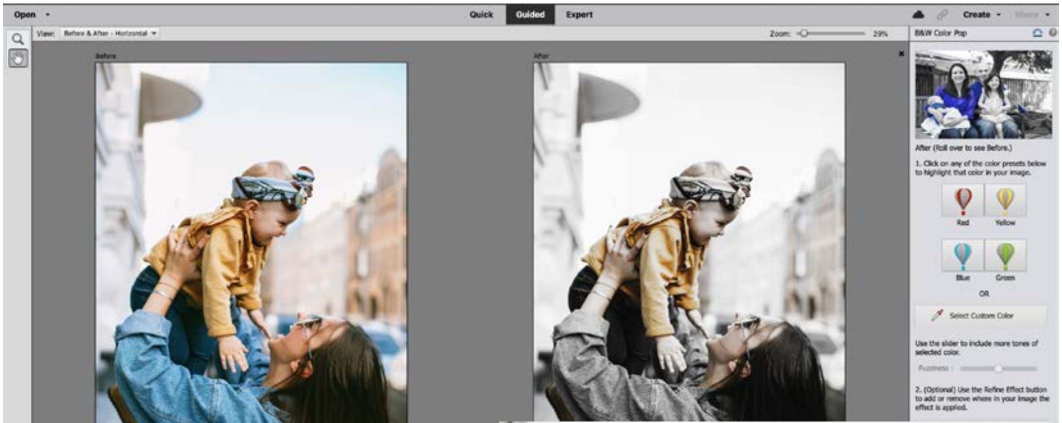

Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
View: After Only
Zoom: 33%
After
Duotone Effect
2. Choose a Duotone Effect preset.
Normal
Gradient
3. (Optional) Customize your duotone colors.
Opacity
4. (Optional) Apply shape overlay.
Select a shape
Color Picker
Learn more about: Choosing Colors
new
current
OK
Cancel
Only Web Colors
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

H: 190 °
S: 22 %
B: 81 %
R: 162
G: 199
B: 207
# a2c7cf

Color selection: Another very nice feature is the ability to modify the colors initially chosen for the duotone. Elements provides just six duotone color combinations or presets. Best practice would be to choose the one that fits closest to your idea of 'perfection' then, by clicking one of the squares to the left of each color slider, you can pick another color from the **Color Picker**—as well as varying the brightness—by adding more or less white and black in the combination—a similar process that you'd experience if using Adobe Photoshop CC.

B&W Color Pop

Guided Edit Mode is, in this version of Adobe Photoshop Elements, a powerhouse of useful features. This one, **B&W Color Pop,** has been around for several versions—come to think of it, even some cameras have this feature as in inbuilt camera "look."


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 29%
Before
After
B&W Color Pop
Red
Yellow
Blue
Green
OR
Select Custom Color
Fuzziness :
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Click on any of the color presets below to highlight that color in your image.

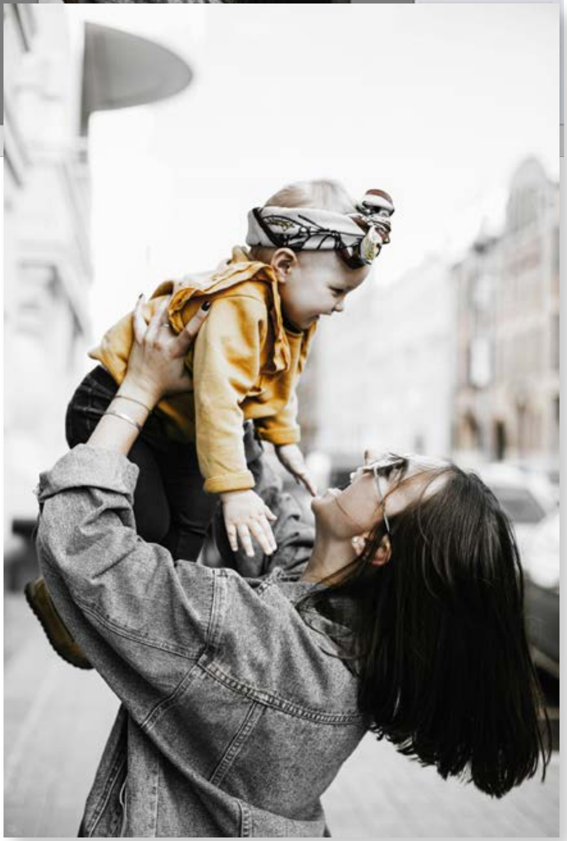
Use the slider to include more tones of selected color.

2. (Optional) Use the Refine Effect button to add or remove where in your image the effect is applied.

This is definitely one of the simpler **Guided Edits** on offer—it's only got four features or tools that you need to negotiate—and that makes it easy, simple, and fast.

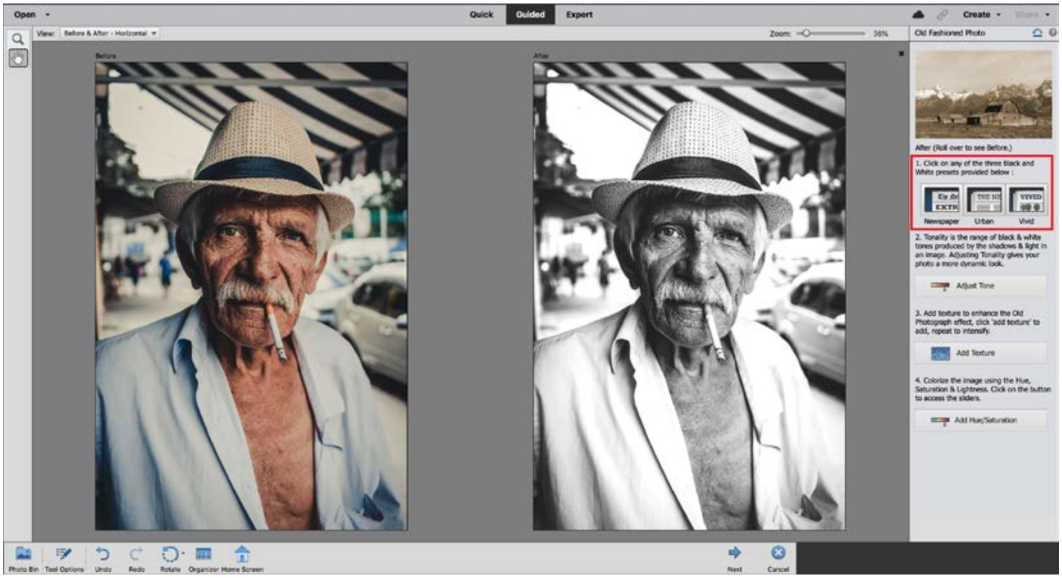
Step one: Open the image and decide on the color you want to highlight (top screenshot, in red). I chose the yellow top of the child as she's the main subject, but you can choose **Red**, **Yellow**, **Blue**, **Green**, or pick your own using the eye dropper if needed using the **Select Custom Color** button.

Step two: I liked the selection it made here (it was clean because there was no other yellow in the frame) so I didn't need to use the **Fuzziness** slider or the **Refine Effect** tool. I did whack in a heap more saturation as I thought the initial knocked-back tint was, well, a bit weak. How's that for an (almost) instant visual hit!



Old Fashioned Photo

Black and white conversions, despite Elements having an easy-to-use **Convert to Black and White** feature (under **Enhance**) can be tricky—it's easy enough to do it, but to do it well, with a richness of tonality, takes a bit of skill. I have included this **Guided Edit** feature because it does a great job of tinting images—not just "sepia toning" but really offering a cool range of color tones that most would have never thought to create in the past. Now you can!


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 36%
Before
After
Old Fashioned Photo
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Click on any of the three Black and White presets provided below :

Newspaper Urban Vivid

2. Tonality is the range of black & white tones produced by the shadows & light in an image. Adjusting Tonality gives your photo a more dynamic look.

Adjust Tone

3. Add texture to enhance the Old Photograph effect, click 'add texture' to add, repeat to intensify.

Add Texture

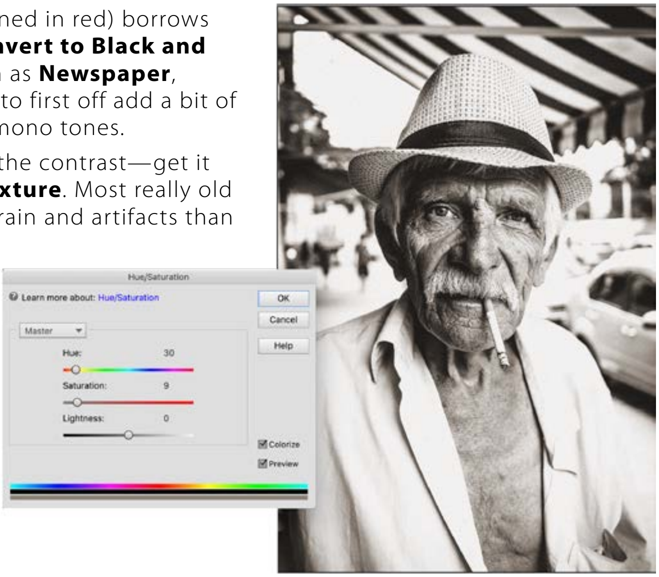
4. Colorize the image using the Hue, Saturation & Lightness. Click on the button to access the sliders.

Add Hue/Saturation

Step one: This first feature (outlined in red) borrows a few of the recipes from the **Convert to Black and White** tool under **Enhance** (such as **Newspaper**, **Urban**, and **Vivid**), allowing you to first off add a bit of contrast "kick" to the converted mono tones.

Step two: Adjust Tones affects the contrast—get it looking good, then on to **Add Texture**. Most really old photographs actually have less grain and artifacts than we have now—even so, use the **Add Texture** slider to add grain/texture if you think it merits it.

Step three: Add **Saturation** (color intensity)—this adds the **Colorize** effect that you'd normally see in **Hue/ Saturation**. I think this should be step two so you can then adjust the sepia tones rather than waiting for the last step. Anyway, it produces a great result.


Hue/Saturation
Learn more about: Hue/Saturation
OK
Cancel
Help

Master

Hue: 30

Saturation: 9

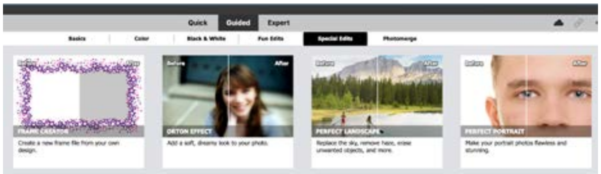
Lightness: 0

☑ Colorize

☑ Preview

Perfect Landscape

This is a neat new feature to Photoshop Elements—and to be honest I dismissed it immediately because I thought, "*OK, this is just going to be a fancy sky-brightening feature with, maybe, a diffuse filter effect*." It really pays to check all Elements' features in greater depth because, increasingly, you'll find some are now hosting sleek AI-driven features. This feature is no exception. You'll find **Perfect Landscape** in the **Guided Edit** edit menu, under **Special Edits**. What does it do? This is a sky replacement tool, which is impressive on its own, so I'm little curious as to why it has landed up being called **Perfect Landscape**. For me, "Sky Replacement" might have been a better name. Here's how it works:

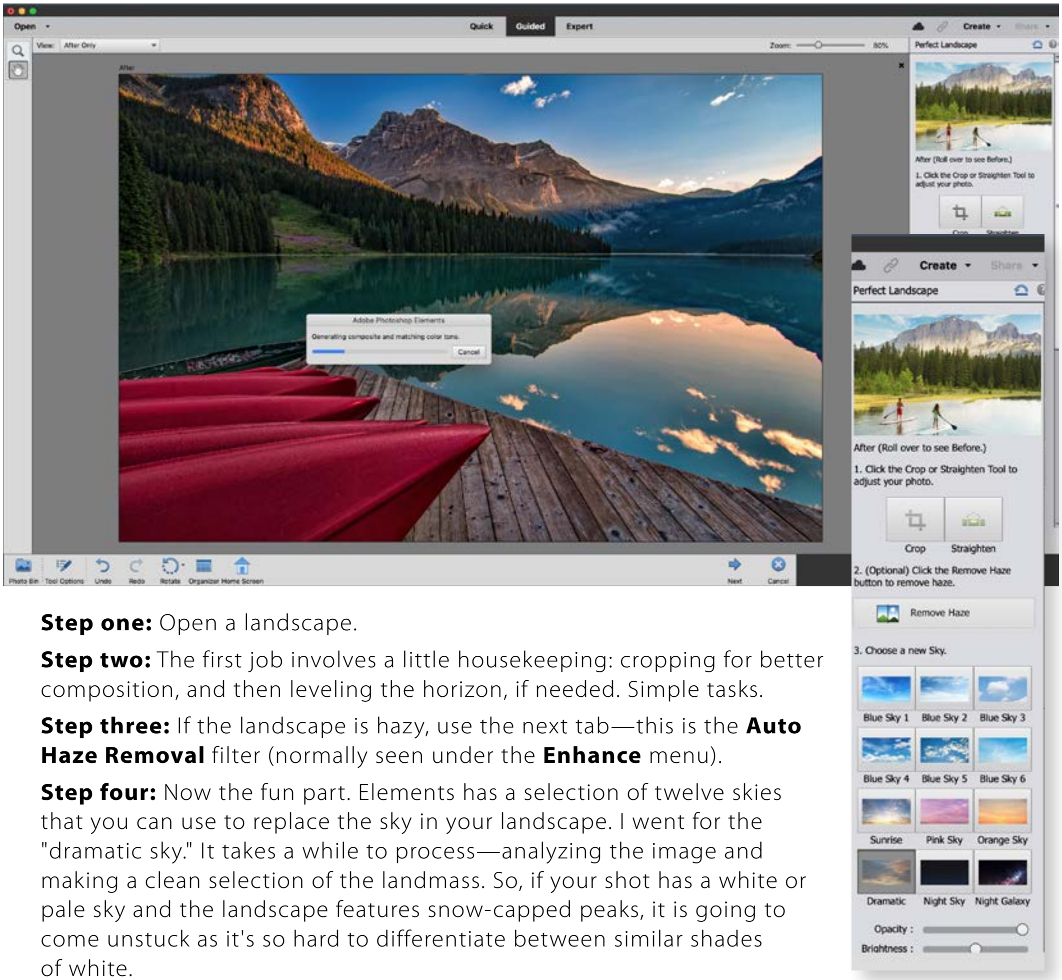

Quick
Guided
Expert
Basics
Color
Black & White
Fun Edits
Special Edits
Photomerge
Before
After
FRAME CREATOR
ORTON EFFECT
PERFECT LANDSCAPE
PERFECT PORTRAIT

Create a new frame file from your own design.

Add a soft, dreamy look to your photo.

Replace the sky, remove haze, erase unwanted objects, and more.

Make your portrait photos flawless and stunning.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: After Only
Zoom:
After
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel
Perfect Landscape
Crop
Straighten
Remove Haze
Blue Sky 1
Blue Sky 2
Blue Sky 3
Blue Sky 4
Blue Sky 5
Blue Sky 6
Sunrise
Pink Sky
Orange Sky
Dramatic
Night Sky
Night Galaxy
Opacity :
Brightness :

Adobe Photoshop Elements

Generating composite and matching color tone.

Cancel

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Click the Crop or Straighten Tool to adjust your photo.

2. (Optional) Click the Remove Haze button to remove haze.

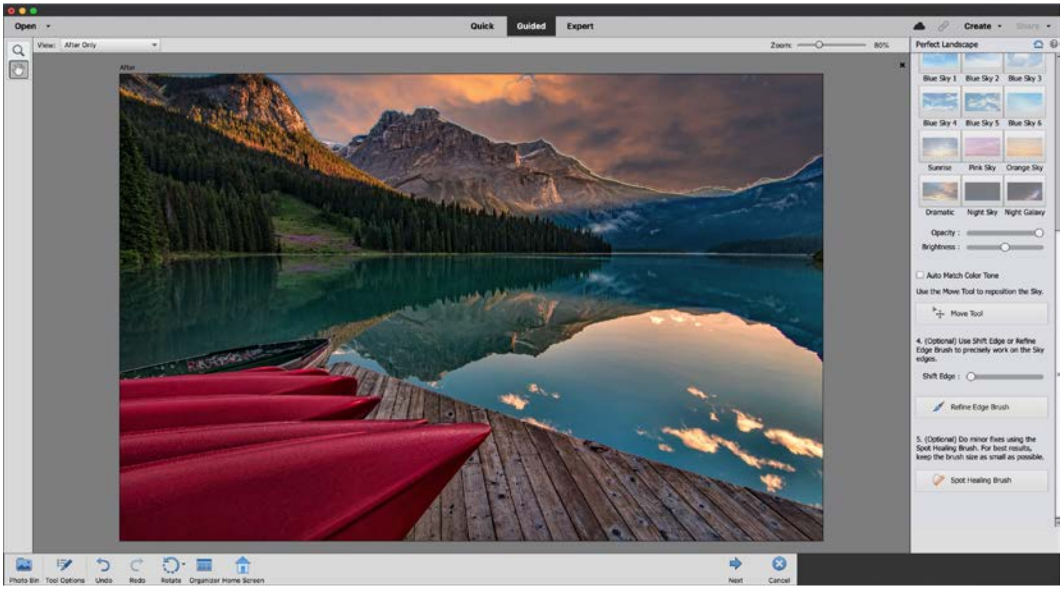
3. Choose a new Sky.

Step one: Open a landscape.

Step two: The first job involves a little housekeeping: cropping for better composition, and then leveling the horizon, if needed. Simple tasks.

Step three: If the landscape is hazy, use the next tab—this is the **Auto Haze Removal** filter (normally seen under the **Enhance** menu).

Step four: Now the fun part. Elements has a selection of twelve skies that you can use to replace the sky in your landscape. I went for the "dramatic sky." It takes a while to process—analyzing the image and making a clean selection of the landmass. So, if your shot has a white or pale sky and the landscape features snow-capped peaks, it is going to come unstuck as it's so hard to differentiate between similar shades of white.



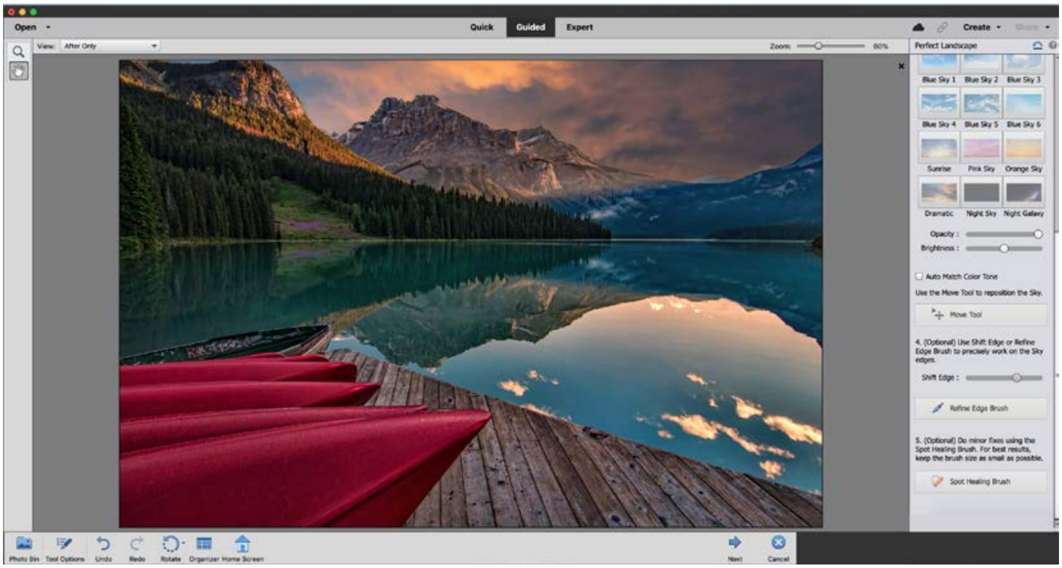
Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: After Only
Zoom: 80%
After
Perfect Landscape
Blue Sky 1
Blue Sky 2
Blue Sky 3
Blue Sky 4
Blue Sky 5
Blue Sky 6
Sunrise
Pink Sky
Orange Sky
Dramatic
Night Sky
Night Galaxy
Opacity :
Brightness :
☐ Auto Match Color Tone
Move Tool
Shift Edge :
Refine Edge Brush
Spot Healing Brush
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

Use the Move Tool to reposition the Sky.

4. (Optional) Use Shift Edge or Refine Edge Brush to precisely work on the Sky edges.

5. (Optional) Do minor fixes using the Spot Healing Brush. For best results, keep the brush size as small as possible.

Step five: Once the analysis has finished, you see how accurate, or not, the AI has been in finding a selection edge. This was pretty good. Use the handy **Shift Edge** slider to expand or contract the selection to reduce, or preferably completely hide any halo.



Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: After Only
Zoom: 80%
Perfect Landscape
Blue Sky 1
Blue Sky 2
Blue Sky 3
Blue Sky 4
Blue Sky 5
Blue Sky 6
Sunrise
Pink Sky
Orange Sky
Dramatic
Night Sky
Night Galaxy
Opacity :
Brightness :
☐ Auto Match Color Tone
Move Tool
Shift Edge :
Refine Edge Brush
Spot Healing Brush
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

Use the Move Tool to reposition the Sky.

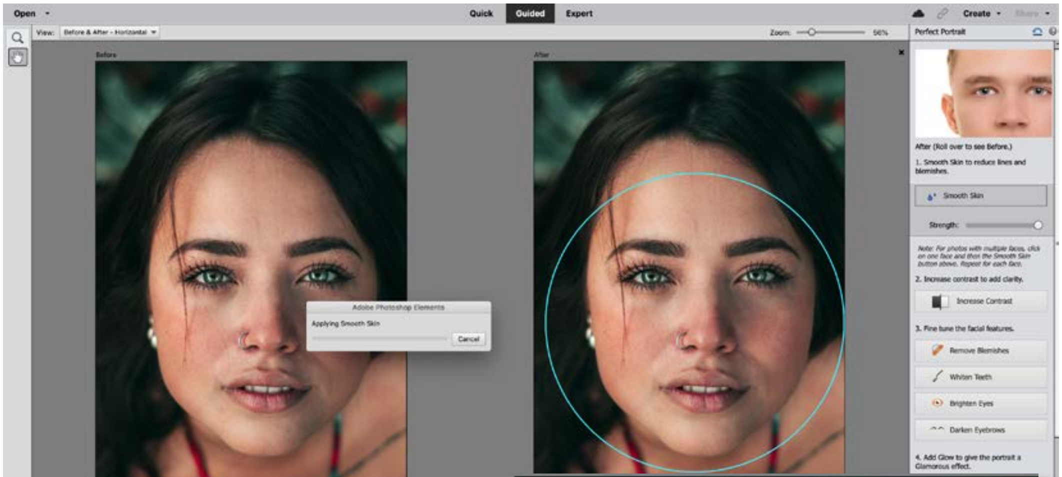
4. (Optional) Use Shift Edge or Refine Edge Brush to precisely work on the Sky edges.

5. (Optional) Do minor fixes using the Spot Healing Brush. For best results, keep the brush size as small as possible.

Step six: Having adjusted the **Shift Edge** slider, that ugly halo has disappeared—the sky now "fits" into the landmass perfectly—without a visible join. **Shift Edge** is an excellent feature. If it appears that the selection has actually grabbed some of the wrong bits of the picture, use the **Refine Edge** tool to paint into the mask, adding or subtracting bits off of the selection till it's perfected. I had to fix a bit of mask error where the sky selection had bled into the snow on the mountain but this was easily fixed.

Perfect Portrait

Elements now has two "Perfect" **Guided** edits—**Perfect Landscape** and this one, **Perfect Portrait**. It's actually an amalgamation of not one, but eight different editing tools and processes, nicely lined up in the panel on the right-hand side of the screen.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 56%
Before
After
Perfect Portrait
Adobe Photoshop Elements
Cancel
Smooth Skin
Strength:
Increase Contrast
Remove Blemishes
Whiten Teeth
Brighten Eyes
Darken Eyebrows
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen

Applying Smooth Skin

After (Roll over to see Before.)

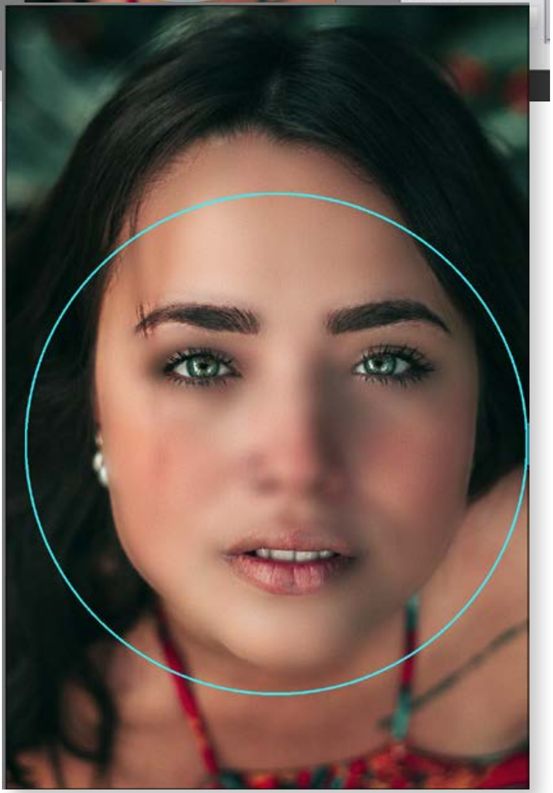
1. Smooth Skin to reduce lines and blemishes.

Note: For photos with multiple faces, click on one face and then the Smooth Skin button above. Repeat for each face.

2. Increase contrast to add clarity.

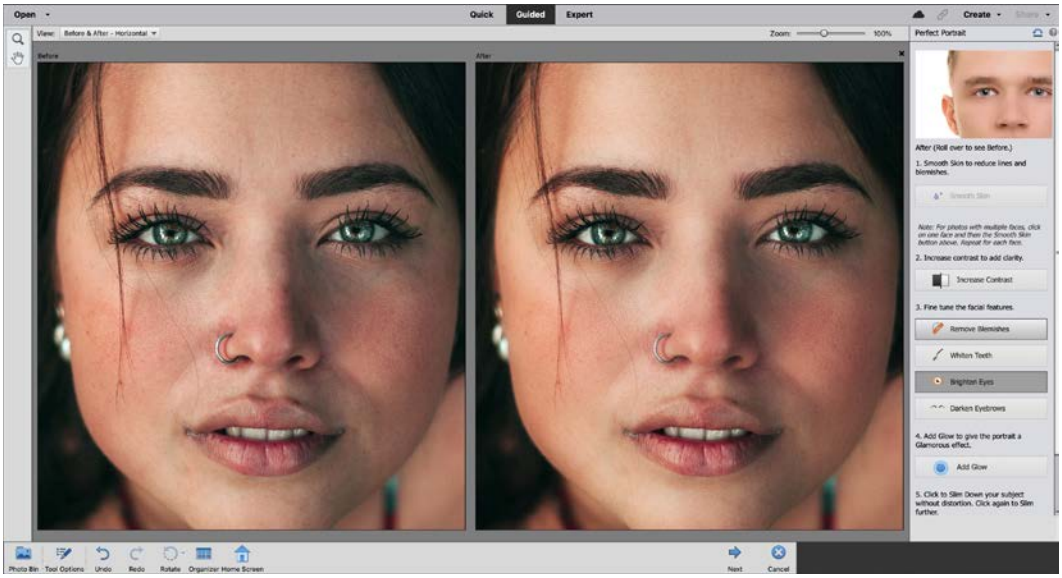
3. Fine tune the facial features.

4. Add Glow to give the portrait a Glamorous effect.



Portrait Perfect: The advantage of a feature like **Perfect Portrait** is not so much that it works really well—it does—but rather that it assembles all the features that you'd need to make a portrait appear perfect. You don't have to use them all, but the relevant ones are there in the toolbox. It's a bit similar to the toolbox a carpenter might take on a job—they're not necessarily going to use everything, but at least they have all situations covered.

To use **Perfect Portrait**, open your image, and run the feature (**Guided Edit>Special Edits>Perfect Portrait**). The most important function is the **Smooth Skin** feature—as you see in the enlarged cutout, it applies way too much—reduce it using the slider then try adding contrast (not needed in this example).


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 100%
Before
After
Perfect Portrait
Smooth Skin
Increase Contrast
Remove Blemishes
Whiten Teeth
Brighten Eyes
Darken Eyebrows
Add Glow
Photo Bin
Tool Options
Undo
Redo
Rotate
Organizer
Home Screen
Next
Cancel

After (Roll over to see Before.)

1. Smooth Skin to reduce lines and blemishes.

Note: For photos with multiple faces, click on one face and then the Smooth Skin button above. Repeat for each face.

2. Increase contrast to add clarity.

3. Fine tune the facial features.

4. Add Glow to give the portrait a Glamorous effect.

5. Click to Slim Down your subject without distortion. Click again to Slim further.

Above: While the **Whiten Teeth** feature is a little risky, the **Brighten Eyes tool**, driven by the **Dodge** brush, works a treat—but be careful not to overdo the effect!

Perfect Portrait utilizes the following tools and features:

The Spot Healing Brush: This is covered in detail elsewhere in this book, and is perfect to removing/covering up small scratches, spots and pimples. Use the square brackets for increase/decrease the brush size so it is about the same size as the blemish and click.

Whiten Teeth: This is a "select and brighten" operation that, in **Perfect Portrait**, is a little hard to control. It is quite aggressive and often snaps to select not only the teeth but other facial features as well (the lips), so I ignore it.

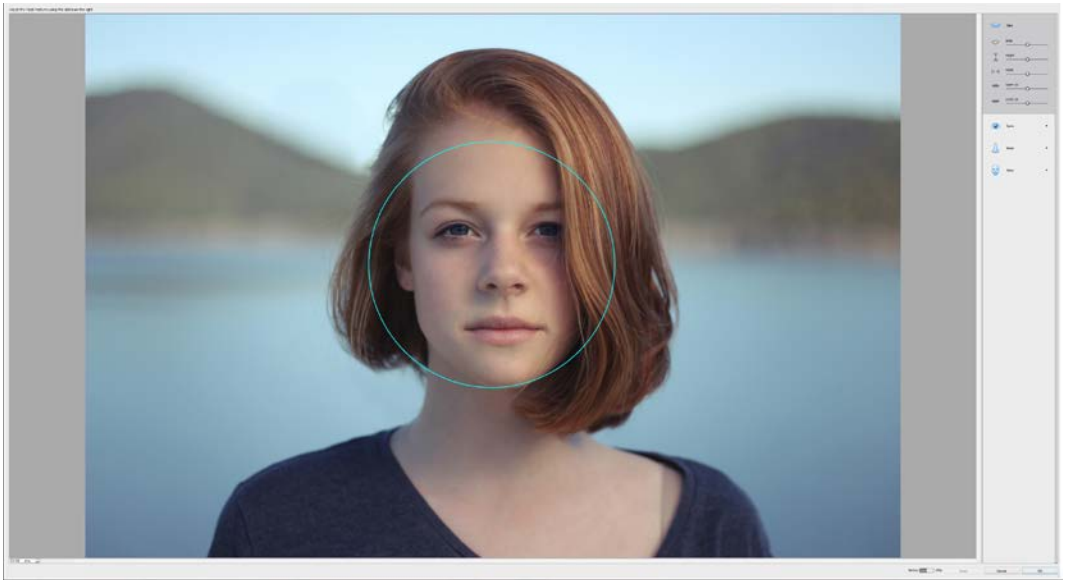
Darken eyebrows: Another excellent brush-based tool—this is actually the **Burn** brush, set to darken only the shadows or midtones (that is, the eyebrows).

Add Glow: This is one of Elements' more obscure diffusion filters and, when used, can significantly lighten the face in particular. It's OK but I thought it not vital for my model.

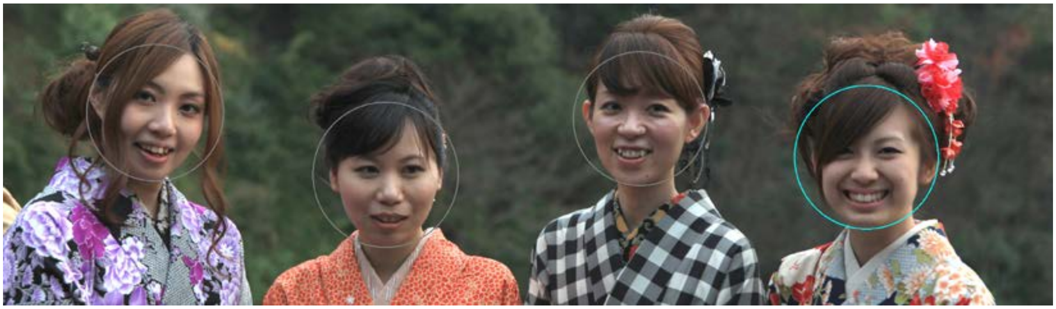
Slim Down: This is a cheeky slimming tool. It simply narrows the width of the image size by a few percent. Repeat and it narrows again—so although the original proportions change the shape of the image, the subject does appear somewhat slimmer.

Adjust Facial Features

This feature appeared in Elements a few versions ago. At the time, I didn't give it a second thought, but when I eventually tried it, I realized how amazing it was. (Warning: your family photos might never look the same after trying this tool.)



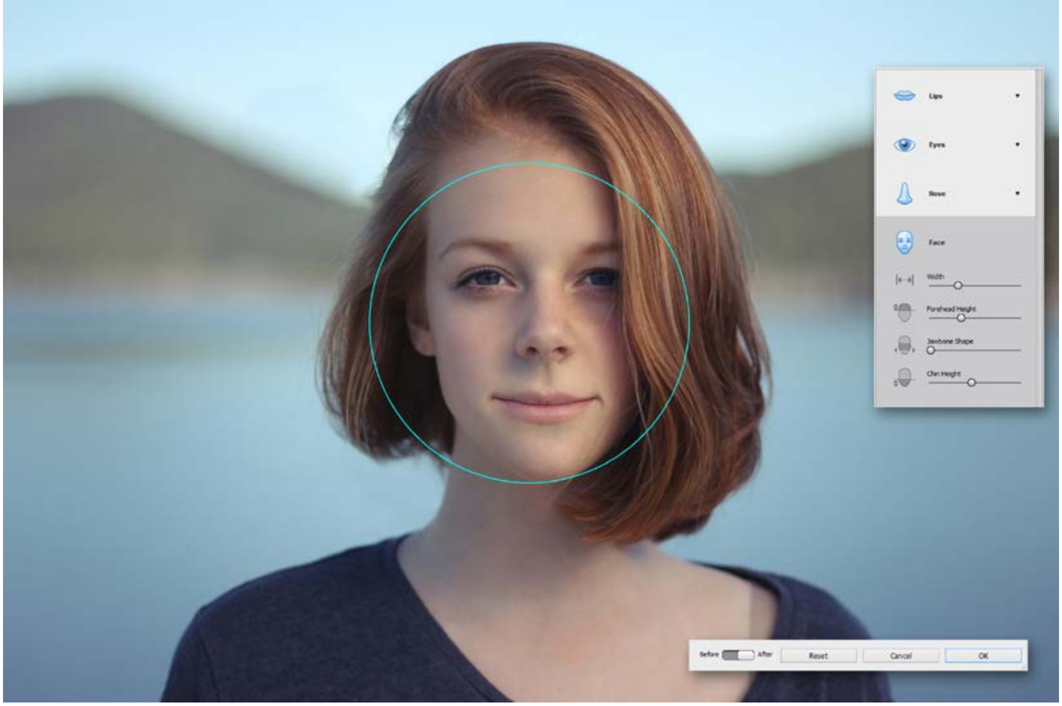
The clever **Adjust Facial Features** tool uses its artificial intelligence to identify and isolate the facial area in a portrait. It isolates key facial elements, such as the eyes, nose, lips and the mouth, so they can be masked and edited separately. These sections can then be changed using a number of distortion techniques – Elements treats the pixels almost as if they were elastic, allowing you to stretch, expand, push, bend, and contract features accordingly.



Multiple faces: If there's more than one face in the snap, this is what Elements will present—a blue circle indicates the current or active face. To work on the other faces, simply click the circle to make it active, add your changes, then move on to the other faces in the line-up.

Work your way down the sliders on offer along the right-hand side of the window to improve or change the character of your subject.

I can't stress enough how effective this tool can be, provided that the portrait is taken relatively straight-on, facing the camera. Another consideration is resolution – the more pixels there are in the file, the better response and cleaner-looking final result you'll get. Images taken off the internet might also present issues as they typically don't have enough resolution and if there are any distractions elsewhere in the image, it might not lock on to a face and refuse to work. When it does work, it can be great fun!



Here's a brief overview of how to get the best from this innovative feature:

Step one: Open a suitable image (note: this works best with a **single portrait**, with the subject more or less looking directly at the camera. However, it will also work if there are multiple heads in the same shot—go from head to head adjusting each one separately).

Step two: Choose the **Adjust Facial Features** tool (**Enhance**>**Adjust Facial Features**) The tool should automatically isolate the face in the picture, circling it in blue.

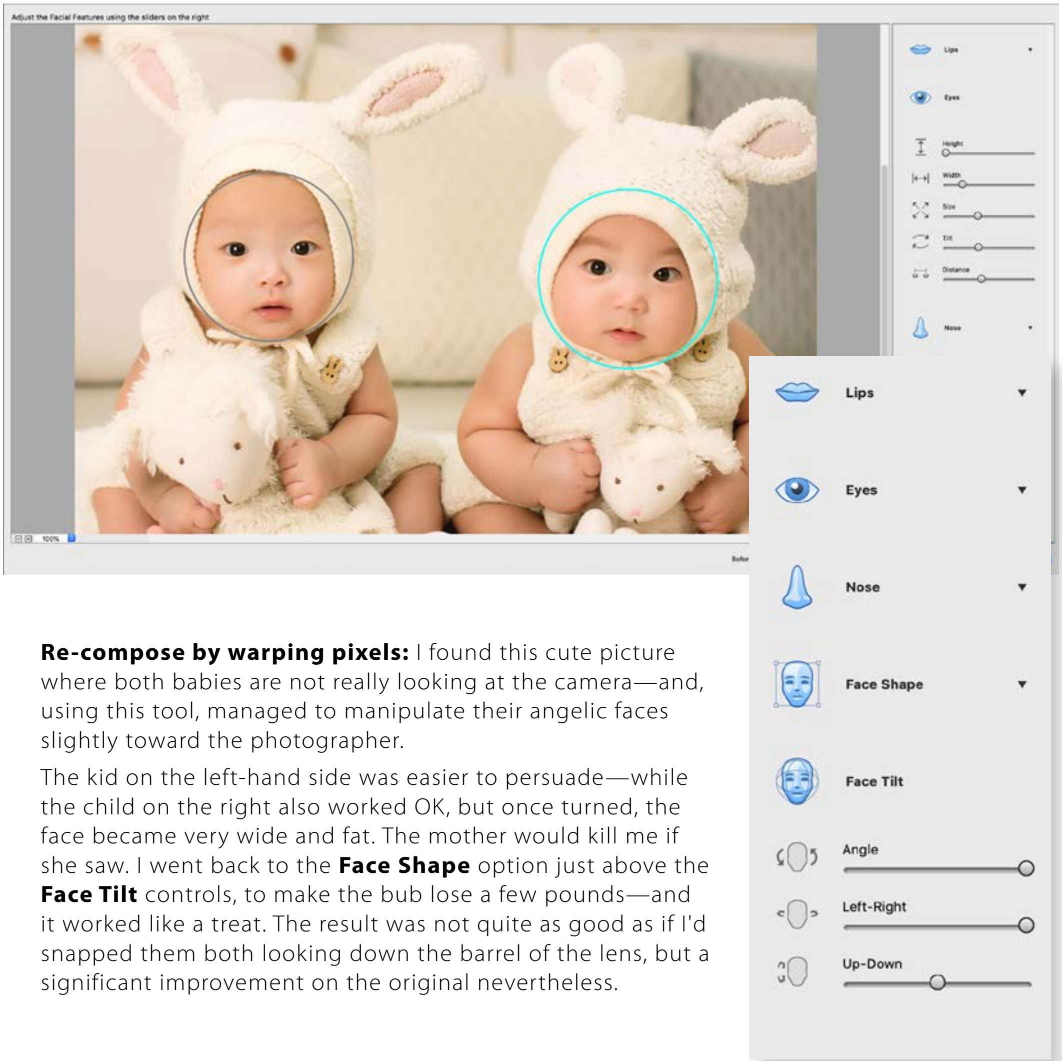
Step three: Use the sliders on the right-hand side of the screen to make your changes.

Step four: Click **OK** when you are happy with the edit and save the file. It's that easy!

Adjust Facial Features: Face Tilt

Since its first appearance a couple of releases ago, **Adjust Facial Features** has made its mark on the editing community. It works brilliantly to make slight adjustments to the human face—rounder eyes, thinner cheeks, and flatter-shaped eyebrows. Elements 2021 has taken the AI technology one step further with a new feature called **Face Tilt**, which you'll see at the bottom of the **Adjust** panel. Of course, like its parent **Adjust** feature, it only really works if the AI can identify a face, or faces, in the shot.

Then, using AI, and a fair bit of background selectivity and pixel manipulation, you can rotate the face area left/right, up/down, and at a rotational angle. Sounds crazy, yes? I thought so, but soon discovered that it actually works.


Adjust the Facial Features using the sliders on the right
Lips
Eyes
Height
Width
Size
Tilt
Distance
Nose
100%
Lips
Eyes
Nose
Face Shape
Face Tilt
Angle
Left-Right
Up-Down

Re-compose by warping pixels: I found this cute picture where both babies are not really looking at the camera—and, using this tool, managed to manipulate their angelic faces slightly toward the photographer.

The kid on the left-hand side was easier to persuade—while the child on the right also worked OK, but once turned, the face became very wide and fat. The mother would kill me if she saw. I went back to the **Face Shape** option just above the **Face Tilt** controls, to make the bub lose a few pounds—and it worked like a treat. The result was not quite as good as if I'd snapped them both looking down the barrel of the lens, but a significant improvement on the original nevertheless.

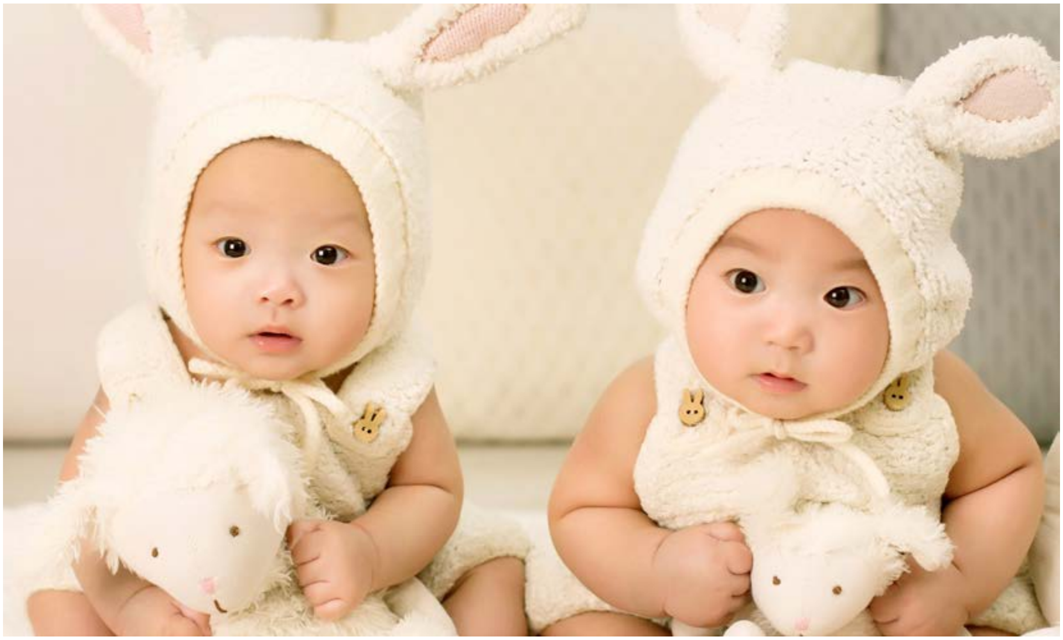
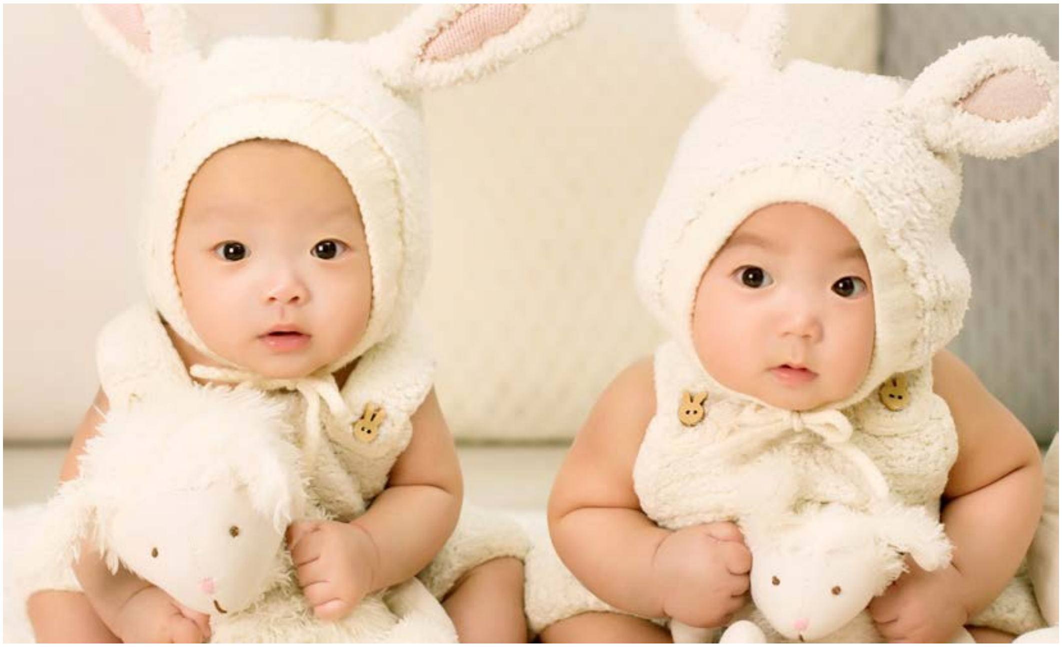


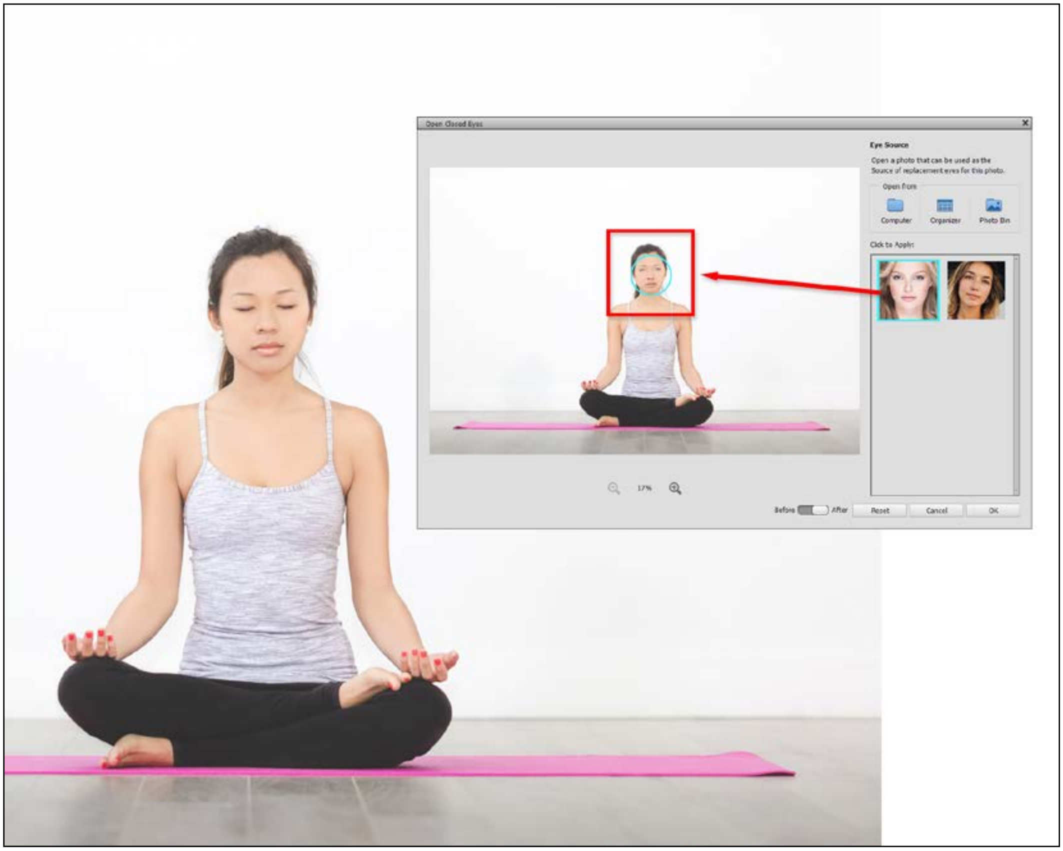
Image comparison: I think this was a good final result (below). Although clearly the effect is tempered severely by the quality of the raw material it's given, you couldn't get a better result using masks in the **Expert** edit mode—unless a huge amount of time was spent on retouching, something most of us don't have an excess of...



Open Closed Eyes

Another seemingly impossible editing feature that you'll see in Elements is its impressive **Open Closed Eyes** tool.

Sure, now I've heard it all – a software application that opens the closed eyes of your portrait subject? Well, don't laugh, it really works, and in most examples that I have tested, it works very well indeed, provided that you can find a pair of eyes that match the portrait sitter's eyes reasonably well. Why is this feature needed? If you have a bunch of portraits, but the one composition you really like has the subject blinking in it, you can use this feature to copy and paste the open eyes from another shot over the blinking eyes. You can also use it to replace one set of eyes with a second, different set of eyes. How good is that!?



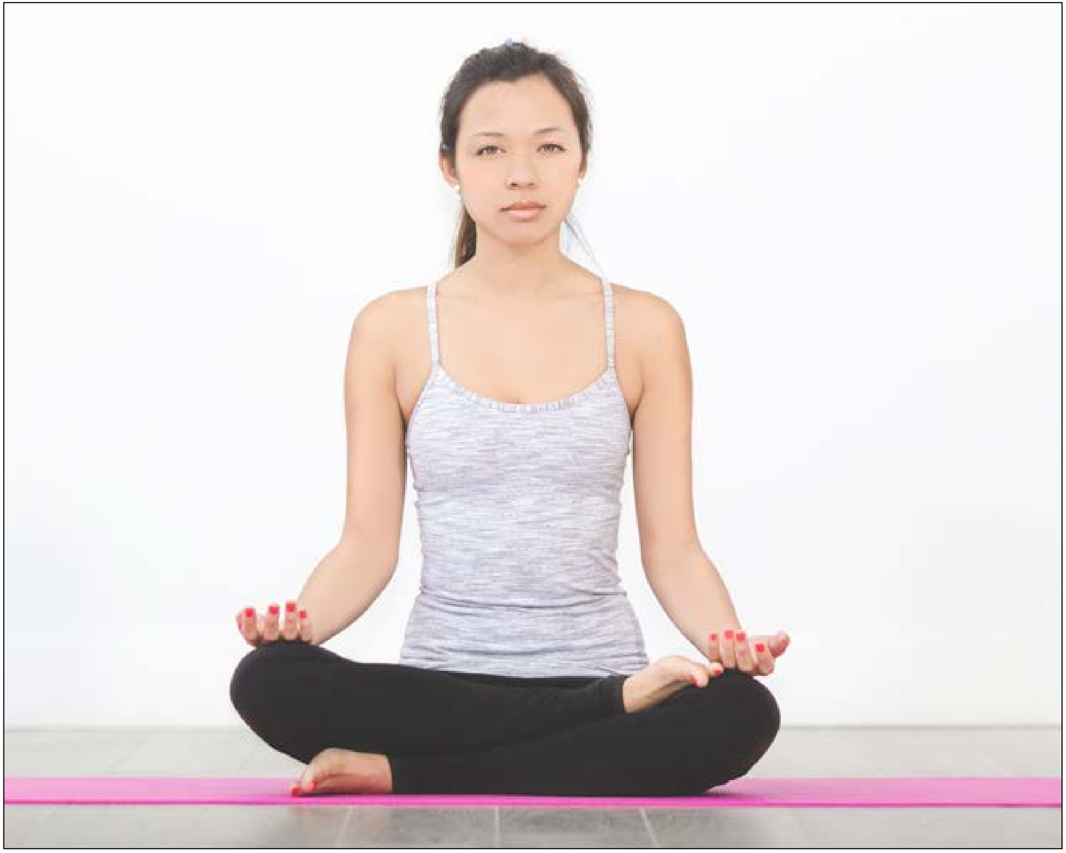
Open a photo that can be used as the Source of replacement eyes for this photo.

Step one: Open the shot in **Quick** or **Expert** mode.

Step two: Choose the **Enhance>Open Closed Eyes** tool and wait for the utility to open in the main window (see the screenshots here).

If no replacement eyes are visible in that window, search for other portraits of that same person and bring them into the window by accessing **Folders**, the **Organizer**, or the **Photo Bin**. You can bring in any number of samples – even pictures of different people – to try, but clearly for a sense of authenticity, you need to match the ethnicity, skin color, eye color, age, and possibly the sex of the subject to make this feature work convincingly.

Step three: Click on one of the thumbnail faces on the right-hand side of the **Open Closed Eyes** panel to see those eyes being pasted over the eyes of your subject instantly. The utility softens the edges of the selection so, providing the skin tones are roughly similar to the target, the process ends up being almost seamless. Brilliant fix!



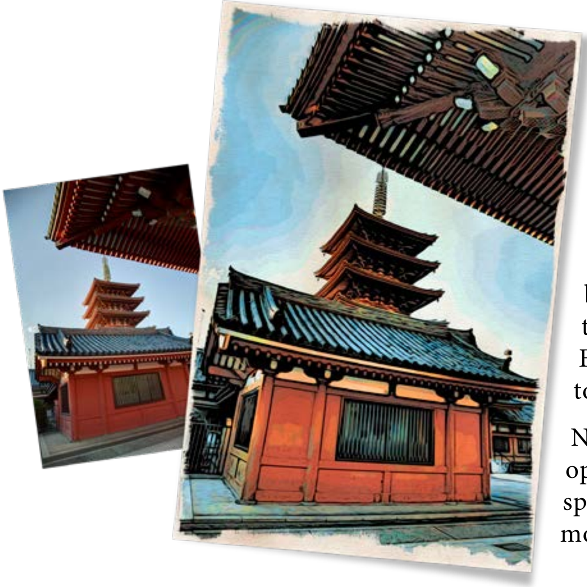
Eyes now open: Here's a quick fix that seems to work really convincingly. I used one of the sample sets of eyes to get this result. With a bit more testing, this could be better if I'd had a wider range of samples to choose from. As with most AI-driven tools, you might run into trouble if the source (eyes) or the target portraits are not 100% clear. If the face is not looking directly at the lens, or if it is obscured by contrasty lighting or even out-of-focus objects, the auto function might refuse to cooperate and therefore the process might not work. Even so, this is still a terrific feature to try, especially if you love taking pictures of people!

Using plugins

A plugin is an additional bit of software produced by a third-party company. It's designed to either expand Elements' existing features or add new ones. Plugins are typically called Photoshop-compliant plugins, which essentially means that they will work with all Adobe programs, as well as a wide range of other editing programs (such as Corel Paint Shop Pro).

My current favorite Elements plugin changes the look of any image from purely photographic to something very illustrative at the click of the mouse.

My all-time favorite plugin for Photoshop Elements is called Moku Hanga (a Japanese phrase for wood block printing). Now, I love these traditional Japanese prints, but I could never afford one because they are very expensive—however, I can reproduce the look of a real woodblock print using this amazing plugin from Jixi Pix. It takes a few minutes to create an effect like this but, because the plugin offers so many variants, it usually takes longer just to decide which one to keep!



One popular plugin from Topaz Labs brings incredible selection accuracy to the Elements edit suite, refining Elements' already-excellent selection tools further.

Not all plugins work on Mac and PC operating systems, so it pays to check the specs carefully before you part with any money.

You can also find plugins that perform the following:

- Sharpening
- Noise reduction
- Grunge looks
- Fine art effects
- Painting looks
- Cartoons
- 3D paper effects
- High Dynamic Range effects
- Black and white conversions

Installing a plugin is a simple operation:

Download the file from the host website.

Double-click the installer.

Follow the on-screen prompts.

Restart the PC, launch Photoshop Elements, and open an image. To check that the software has indeed **plugged in**, choose the **Filter** menu and scroll all the way to the bottom. Plugins will be located at the base of the **Filter** menu, under **Other**.

Keyboard shortcuts

- Image Modes - **Quick/Expert Edit>Image>Mode**
- Adjust Color Curves - **Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Color Curves**
- Blur, Sharpen, Smudge - **Tool Bar>Enhance** (*R*)
- Eraser - **Tool Bar>Draw** (*E*)
- Smart Brush - **Tool Bar>Enhance** (*F*)
- Paint Bucket - **Tool Bar>Draw** (*K*)
- Gradient Tool - **Tool Bar>Draw** (*G*)
- Haze Removal Tool - **Enhance>Haze Removal** (*Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + Z*)
- Content-aware Move Tool - **Tool Bar>Modify** (*Q*)
- Recompose Tool - **Tool Bar>Modify** (*W*)
- Move and Scale Object - **Guided Edit>Basics**
- Quote Graphic - Create Menu
- Convert to Black and White - **Enhance> Convert to Black and White** (*Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + B*)
- Duotone Effect - **Guided Edit>Fun Edits**
- B&W Color Pop - **Guided Edit>Black and White**
- Old Fashioned Photo - **Guided Edit>Fun Edits**
- Perfect Landscape - **Guided Edit>Fun Edits**
- Perfect Portrait - **Guided Edit>Fun Edits**
- Adjust Facial Features - **Enhance> Adjust Facial Features**
- Adjust Facial Features: Face Tilt - **Enhance> Adjust Facial Features**
- Open Closed Eyes - **Enhance> Open Closed Eyes**
- Moving Photos - **Enhance>Moving Photos**

Summary

In this chapter, we have explored some of Photoshop Elements' "other" features. By this I mean those that are not part of mainstream editing but are still notable—for their ease of use, productivity, and visual impact.

By now we should all be familiar with processes such as using the Camera RAW utility, controlling brightness and contrast adjustments using **Levels**, and manipulating color intensity using the powerful **Hue/Saturation** feature.

But there's a great deal more to explore in this application, so hopefully this chapter has inspired you to look further afield—into all the additional menus, panels, and processes, and then to play with some of the very cool features that you'll find there.

In the next chapter, we look forward to an adventure into the world of graphic design. Although this program began life as a simple JPEG photo editing program, it's evolved into a sophisticated image editor and asset management application. What many do not know is that Elements also comes packed with a wide range of sophisticated graphic design and illustration tools. So many, in fact, that there's enough for a book on these alone.

We will be studying the benefits of working with graphic tablets and harnessing the power of the **View** menu—essential to all designers. Then, we'll move on to working with vectors, learning basic drawing skills using Elements' pen and brush tools, before moving on to learn about some of the more esoteric but highly entertaining artistic tools, such as **Impressionist Brush**, the **Cookie Cutter** tool, and the **Color Replacement** brush.

8

Advanced Drawing and Painting Techniques

This chapter will look at some of the more *esoteric* design functions that you'll find in Elements. I use the word *esoteric* simply because these features are more graphic than *photographic*, more illustrative than *documentary*. However, as you'll see here, these features can be used to create impressive standalone designs, or they can be incorporated into your day-to-day photography projects to produce outstanding results.

As you'll see in this chapter, it's not so hard to push your experience into the field of basic graphic design—and if that's not your interest, we'll also look at some of Elements' creative brush effects, tools such as the cool **Impressionist Brush**, and even learn how to manipulate photos using some of the thousands of free custom brushes available online—just to get you started.

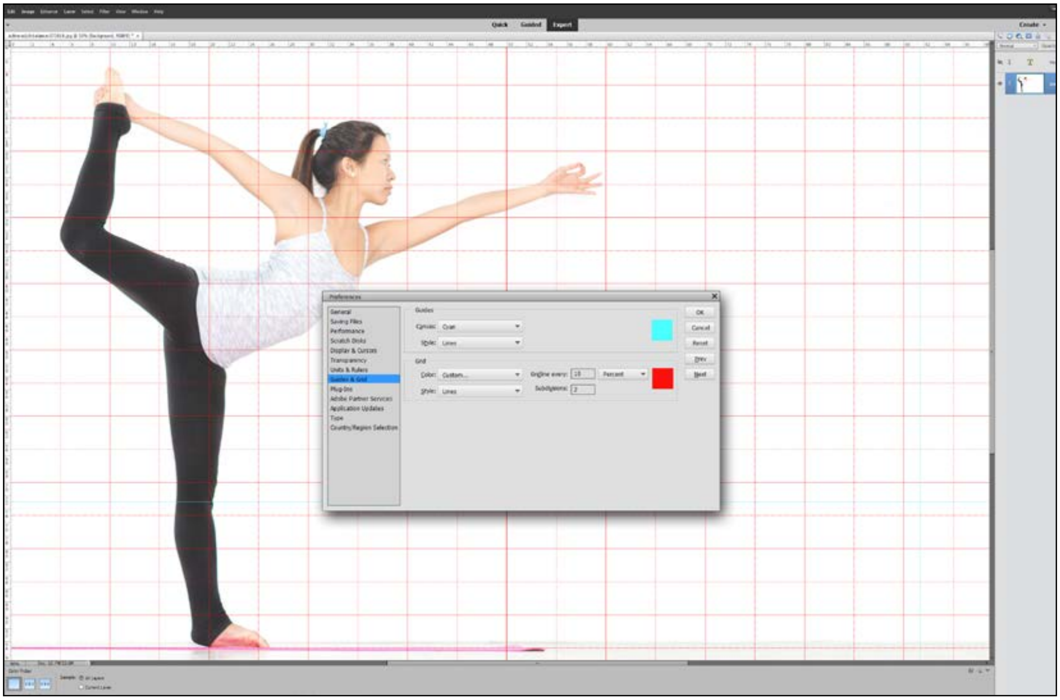
Topics that we will learn in this chapter:

- The View menu
- Using brushes
- Brush behaviour
- The Impressionist Brush
- Color Replacement Brush
- Working with Brushes
- Using Custom Brushes
- Adobe vectors – Adobe clip art
- Creating custom vector illustrations
- Using a graphics tablet

The View menu

Before you start any design project, it's important to have layout and line-up tools at your disposal. That's mostly the job of the **View** menu. The menu repeats some of the keyboard shortcuts we've already mentioned elsewhere in this book, notably the **Zoom in** and **Zoom out** functions (*Ctrl/Cmd* + + and *Ctrl/Cmd* + -, respectively). These are two of the most important keyboard shortcuts because, as an image editor, you need to constantly go in close to retouch, then zoom out to see the global effect, then go in close again, then zoom out again, on a regular basis. Alternatively, you can use *Ctrl/Cmd* + *0* (zero) to **fit the image** to the main screen—another handy shortcut.

Zooming to **Print Size** will show you how large an image will print. If you have adjusted the file resolution so that it matches the output requirement (in the **Image Size** panel), this should provide accurate feedback on the finished display size.



Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Preferences
General
Saving Files
Performance
Scratch Disks
Display & Cursors
Transparency
Units & Rulers
Guides & Grid
Plug-Ins
Adobe Partner Services
Application Updates
Type
Country/Region Selection
OK
Cancel
Reset
Prev
Next

Guides
Color: Cyan
Style: Lines
Grid
Color: Custom...
Style: Lines
Gridline every: Percent

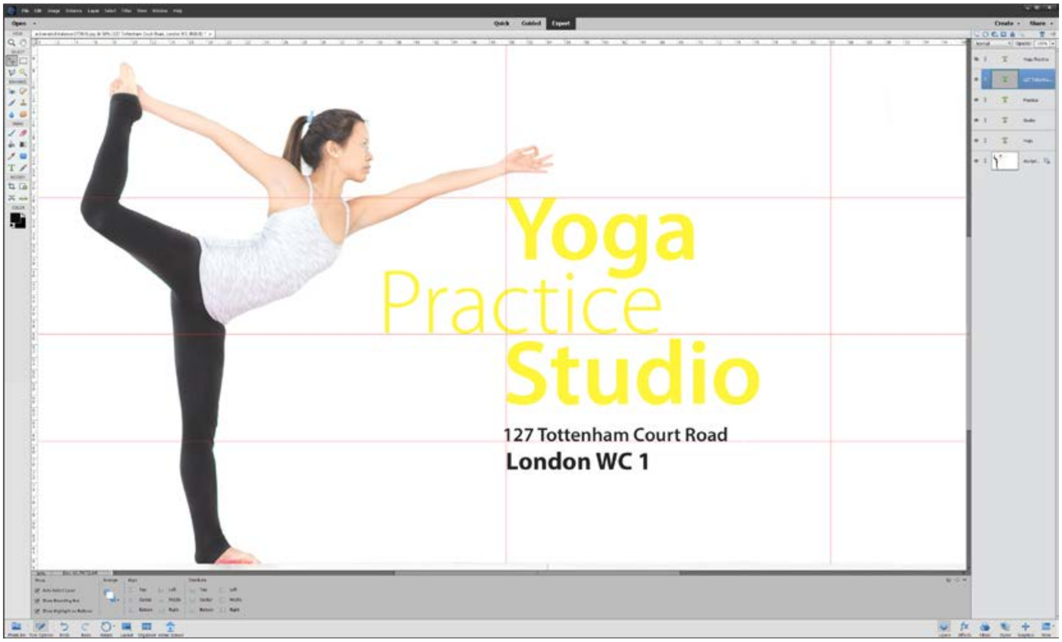
Above: In this screenshot, I have opened the **Preferences** panel (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *K*) at the **Guides and Grid** tab and have changed the **Grid** so that it displays in red, every 25% interval, with four subdivisions. This produces a clearer-looking grid with an easy-to-see vertical and horizontal center line.

Snap To is another handy feature, especially if you are using Elements for page layout or design and need to precisely align multiple elements (text boxes, images, or other graphic elements). Position a **Guide** somewhere on the page, then drag each element one by one into the vicinity of the guide – provided that **Snap To** is turned on in the menu, it will "snap" or stick to the guide as if magnetic. I use this feature constantly because it works so well. If you are working on a project where positioning elements freehand is necessary, turn **Snap To** off so as to specifically stop those elements sticking to Grids or Guides.

Tip:

When drawing a straight line, either horizontally, vertically, or at 45 degrees, do so while holding down the *Shift* key. This locks the tool into drawing on one of those three axes only, making the process of alignment that much easier and quicker.

Rulers are self-explanatory, but **Guides** aren't so obvious. A **Guide** is a moveable line used to help position or line up multiple elements in a file. Guides can be positioned anywhere in the main screen, vertically or horizontally—and you can have as many of these as are needed for the design job; mouse-click and drag them off the ruler one at a time. To get rid of them, either drag them back off the screen into the ruler, or choose **View**>**Clear Guides**.



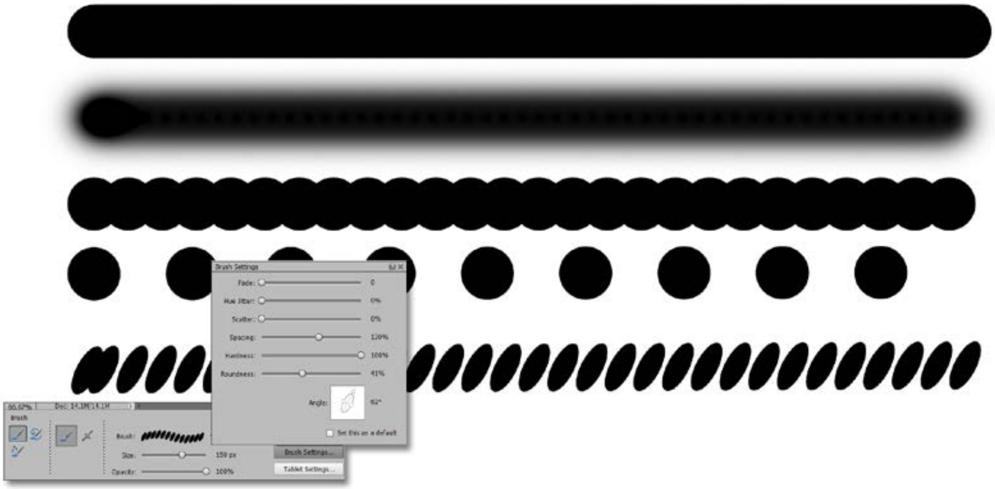
In this screenshot, you can see the **Guides** (red) in action. Guides (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *;*) are brilliant for lining up text and image layers for precise positioning. Note: Guides and Grids do not print.

Controlling Brush behaviour

Though Elements is mostly a photo editing program, many of its tools rely on the use of a brush – **Dodge**, **Burn**, **Healing**, **Clone**, and **Smart** are all examples of brush-based tools.

But retouching brush tools are not the only brushes available. Elements contains a wide range of "real" (digital) brushes used to paint, sketch, draw, and illustrate, either by brushing over an existing picture or by starting from scratch with a blank canvas.

And if that's not enough, Elements allows the user to change the characteristics of each brush – the shape, orientation, opacity, color, pressure, and appearance, all of which we'll look at here.



Brush Settings

Fade: 0

Hue Jitter: 0%

Scatter: 0%

Spacing: 120%

Hardness: 100%

Roundness: 41%

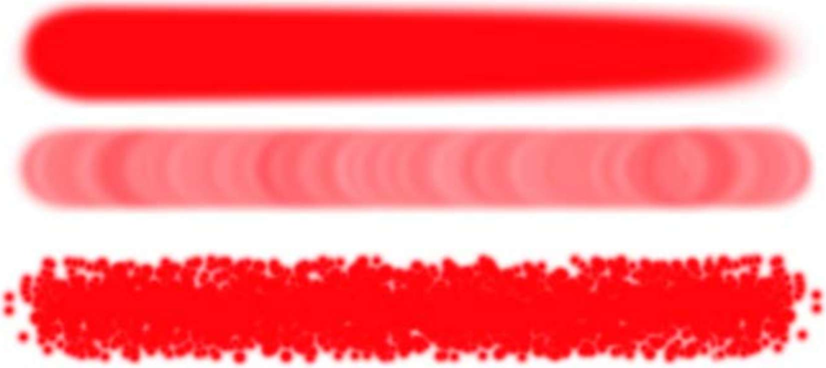
Angle: 62°

☐ Set this as a default

Size: 150 px

Opacity: 100%

Which brush? On top of the expected hard and soft brush tips (the top two lines in the screenshot here), Elements provides a number of other brush characteristics, which include **Spacing** – if you are drawing and the line looks a bit lumpy, this is possibly because the **Spacing** slider is incorrectly set – which is the third line from the top. You can also angle the brush tip for an oblique look – this is more for users of a graphics tablet, pictured here.



Brush characteristics: The **Brush Settings** panel also features effects such as **Fade** (top), **Jitter**, and **Scatter** (which spreads the paint around, a little like the **Impressionist Brush**).

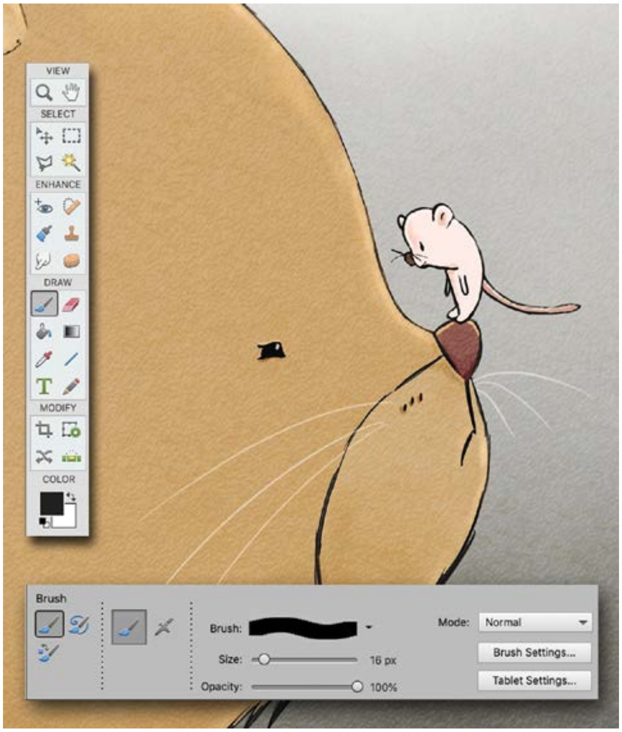
Above: With the assistance of a graphics tablet—and a lot of skill—you can create a wide range of impressive illustrations using the creative tools in Photoshop Elements.

Brush and Pencil tools

To get the best from this application, you really need to be adept at drawing with the mouse or a **graphics tablet**. These devices are perfect for artists and designers because they substitute a pen for the mouse—the same size and shape as a real pen (see the section on graphics tablets in this chapter).

Elements has three types of brush tool—the **Brush Tool**, the **Impressionist Brush Tool**, and the **Color Replacement Tool**:

- The **Brush** Tool looks and works like an electronic version of a paint brush: choose a color from **Color Picker**, pick a brush tip from the 300+ on offer, set the size and opacity, and draw. Instead of using **Normal**, you can paint in a different **Blend Mode**, depending on how you'd like the brush pixels to blend into the layer pixels. With skill and the right brief, artists can create impressive-looking artworks.
- **Impressionist Brush** is fun because it (sort of) clones your image and turns it into large, fuzzy brush strokes, producing what passes for an impressionist look. Broaden your impressionist style using the **Advanced** button, which provides more brush strokes, tolerance settings, and so on.
- The **Color Replacement Brush.** This relies on applying a color change effect to similar-colored pixels. So, if I want to replace blue with red, provided that all the blue pixels are the same (color) value, it will work well. But we all know that digital images are composites of different colors—so use the **Tolerance** slider to make it more or less lenient when it's making a color change. Increase the tolerance and it will apply the change to lighter and darker shades of blue. There are different brush styles, four different **Blend** modes (**Color** works best), and the **Contiguous** checkbox.

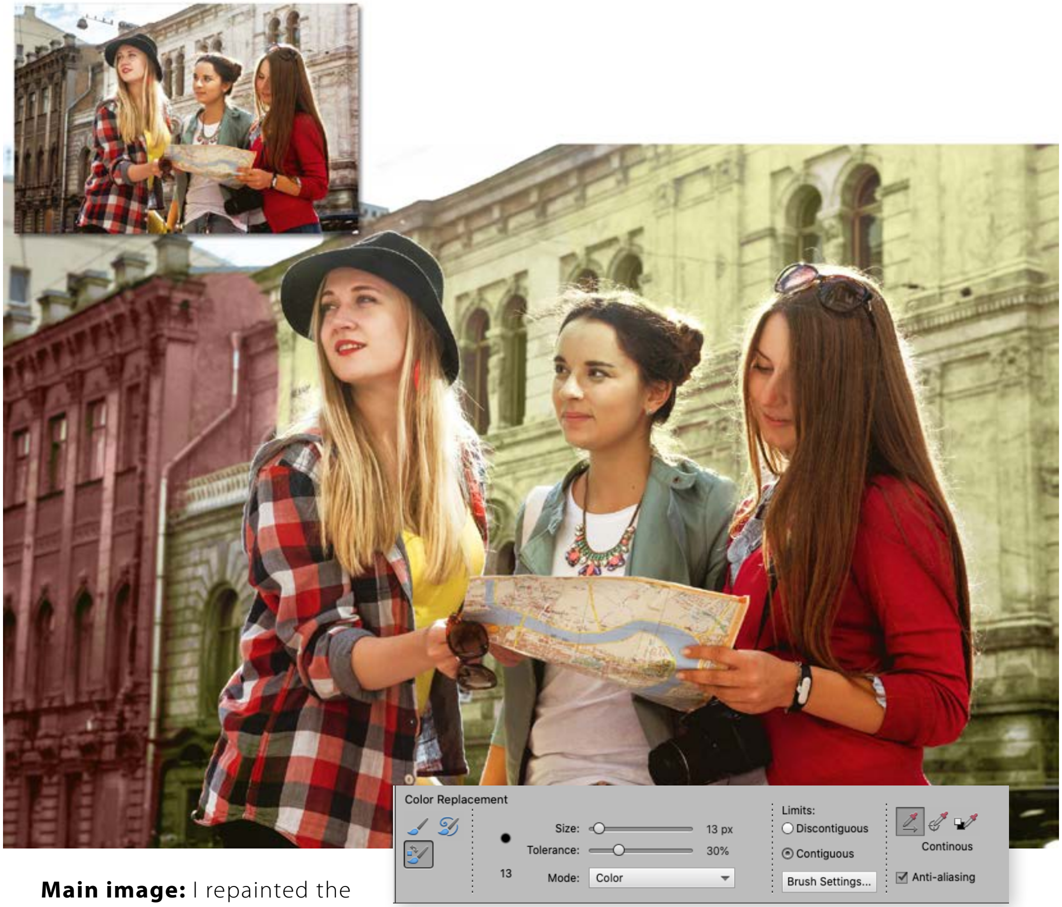


Mode: Normal
Size: 16 px
Opacity: 100%

- The **Pencil** tool, alone on the **Tool Bar**, draws in much the same way as a regular pencil, with variable size, opacity, Blend Modes, and an **Auto Erase** feature (which draws the Background Color over the Foreground Color). But, unless you are a skilled artist working with a graphics tablet, it's very hard to work accurately or creatively with this tool.

Color Replacement brush

You could have a lot of fun with this feature—applying the color change effect to similar-colored pixels so that Elements covers the area with a color wash. How much it changes is mostly influenced by the **Tolerance** slider.



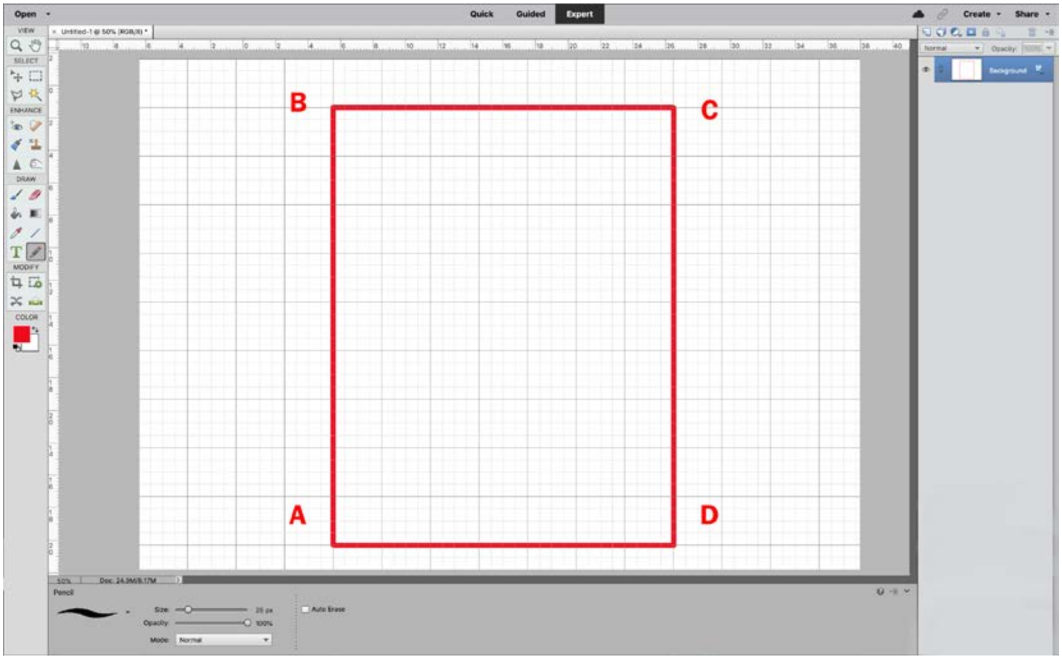
Size: 13 px
Tolerance: 30%
Mode: Color
Limits:
○ Discontiguous
● Contiguous
Continous
☑ Anti-aliasing

Main image: I repainted the town hall in the background in a couple of minutes with the **Color Replacement** tool. I thought that this was a pretty good result.

So, if I want to replace blue with red, provided that all the blue pixels are the same value, it will work very well – but we all know that life in the digital editing realm is not like this, so that's why we have the **Tolerance** slider to make Elements a bit more or less sensitive when it's applying a color change. Increase the tolerance and it will apply the change to lighter and darker shades of blue. You have different brush styles to choose from: four different **Blend Modes** (I find **Color** works best), and the inevitable **Contiguous** or **Discontiguous** checkboxes.

Basic drawing techniques

Now, let's learn a few drawing basics that anyone can achieve, starting by using a neat point-to-point drawing technique to create a **perfect square or rectangle** using any of the brush-based tools in Elements. In fact, this technique also works with all Elements retouching and drawing tools.



Step one: Turn on the **Grid** (*Ctrl/Cmd* + ').

Step two: Choose a drawing brush (such as the **Pencil** or **Brush** tool).

Step three: Mouse-click once on point **A**.

Step four: Hold *Shift* and mouse-click point **B**. The pencil line joins point **A** to **B** in a straight line.

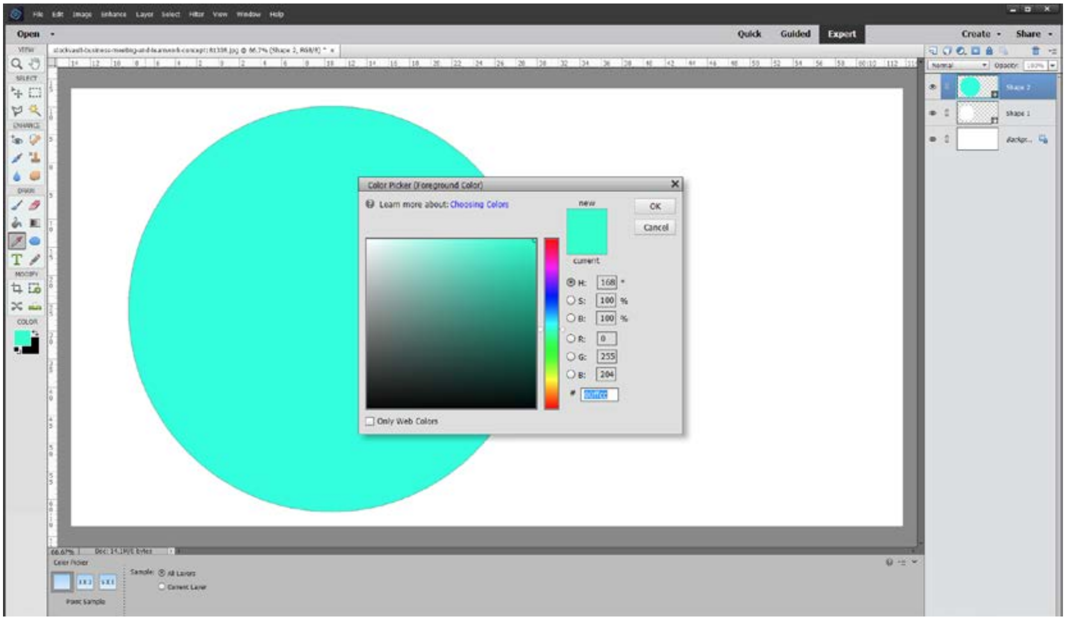
Step five: Hold *Shift* and mouse-click point **C**. The pencil line joins point **B** to **C** in a straight line.

Step six: Hold *Shift* and mouse-click point **D**. The pencil line joins point **C** to **D** in a straight line.

Final step: Hold *Shift* and mouse-click point **A**. The pencil line joins point **D** back to point A.

(Note that this point-to-point drawing technique works with all the **Eraser, Sharpen, Smudge**, and **Blur** brushes—as well as the **Burn**, **Dodge**, and **Sponge** tools).

Now, let's learn how to draw the **perfect circle** using the **Elliptical Shape** tool and the **Elliptical Marquee Selection** tools.

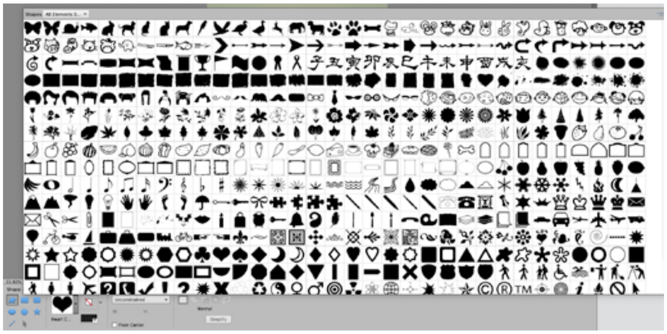

Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
Color Picker (Foreground Color)
Learn more about: Choosing Colors
new
current
OK
Cancel
H: 168 °
S: 100 %
B: 100 %
R: 0
G: 255
B: 204
# 00ffcc
Only Web Colors
Color Picker
Sample: All Layers
Current Layer
Point Sample

Step one: Create a new blank document (**File>New>Blank File** or *Ctrl/Cmd + N*).

Step two: Choose the **Elliptical Marquee tool** – normally, you'd click and drag in the new canvas to draw the shape, but it's hard to get it precisely symmetrical dragging this freehand.

Step three: Hold the *Shift* key, then click and drag in the canvas. The *Shift* key locks the proportions off, giving you a perfect circle.

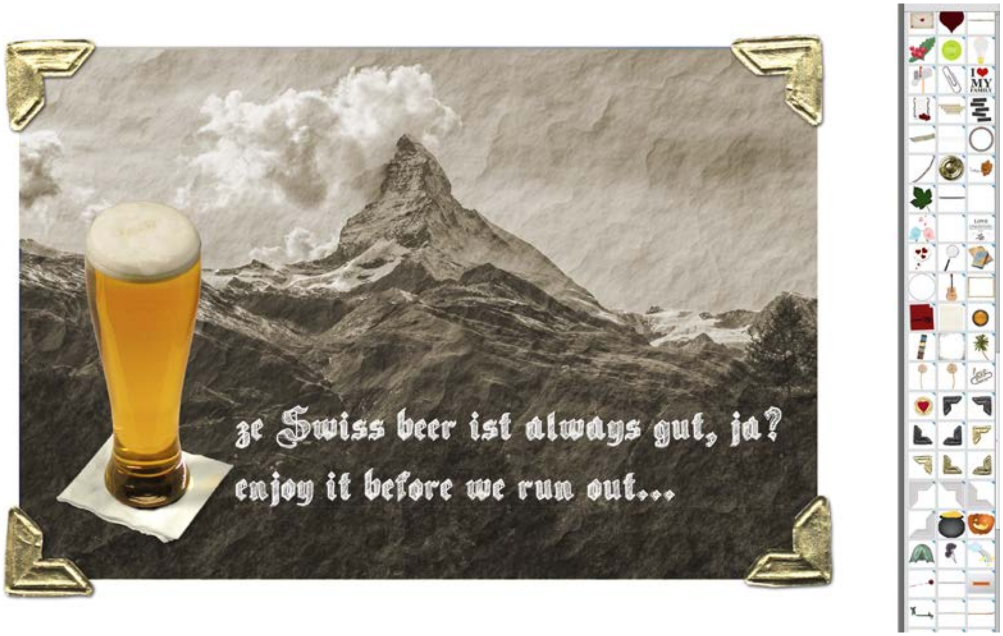
Step four: To add color, I picked up the **Paint Bucket** tool, chose a suitable color from the **Color Picker** (as shown above) off the **Tool Bar**, and clicked once inside the marquee.



Custom shapes: If you are a bit challenged with a pencil or brush, you'll be pleased to read that Elements has a huge range of vector shapes located under the **Custom Shape** tool—everything from a plain circle to Chinese characters, animals, ragged photo edges, and much more. (There are 548 to choose from—all are arranged under different sub-headings, such as animals, arrows, banners, crop shapes, and symbols.)

Working with graphic elements

Photoshop Elements is not Adobe Illustrator, by any stretch of the imagination, but it does contain a reasonably good range of **graphic elements** that can be added to images to enhance their design.

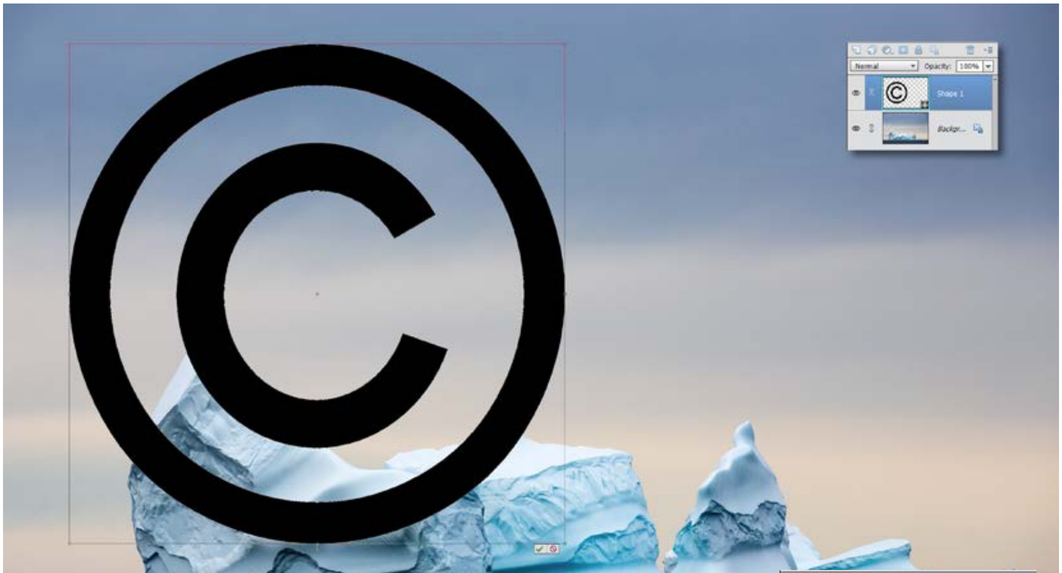

ze Swiss beer ist always gut, ja?
enjoy it before we run out...
I ♥ MY FAMILY

This illustration was made from the range of (free) graphics available through Photoshop Elements—backgrounds, frames, symbols, and images. Everything has to be downloaded from the Adobe servers first, but this takes no time at all as most are fairly low in resolution.

These graphics fall into the following groups:

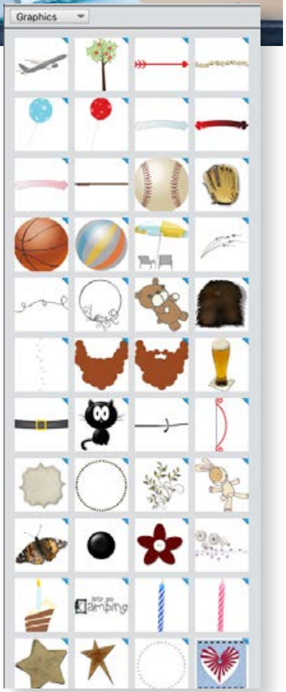
- Graphics that can be added to existing semi-automated creative projects, such as **Photo Book** and **Greeting Card**, found under the **Create** menu. These include a vast array of downloadable content, ranging from **backgrounds** and **picture frames** to **clip art** objects and preset **text styles**.
- Those that are designed to add benefit to single images—graphics such as **text boxes**, **copyright logos**, **arrows**, **lines**, **speech bubbles**, **shapes**, and more.

The graphics in this application are all **vectors**, which means that they are made up from a mathematical formula rather than pixels. This is a good feature because it means they are **infinitely scalable**, compared to a pixel-based image that can only be enlarged by around 50% before it begins to look soft.



Copyright stamp: Here's the perfect example of how a simple graphic can be used. In this example, it's the ubiquitous copyright stamp. I use this to add to images I'm posting to websites I'm not familiar with, or if I'm submitting work to a potential new client. If they want to pay for the image, I replace it with the non-copyright version. Note the copyright has been added to a separate blank layer (panel inset above) and saved as a Photoshop file, thus preserving the two layers. To send this to a client, I'd save the image as a JPEG file, in which case, Elements automatically flattens all layers into one background layer, making it nearly impossible to remove the stamp.

The panel-based graphic elements on the right-hand side of the main screen can be dragged off the **Graphics** panel. Most have to be downloaded from Adobe; you'll see the download timer appear briefly while this happens. It should only take a few seconds before they are added directly into the document.



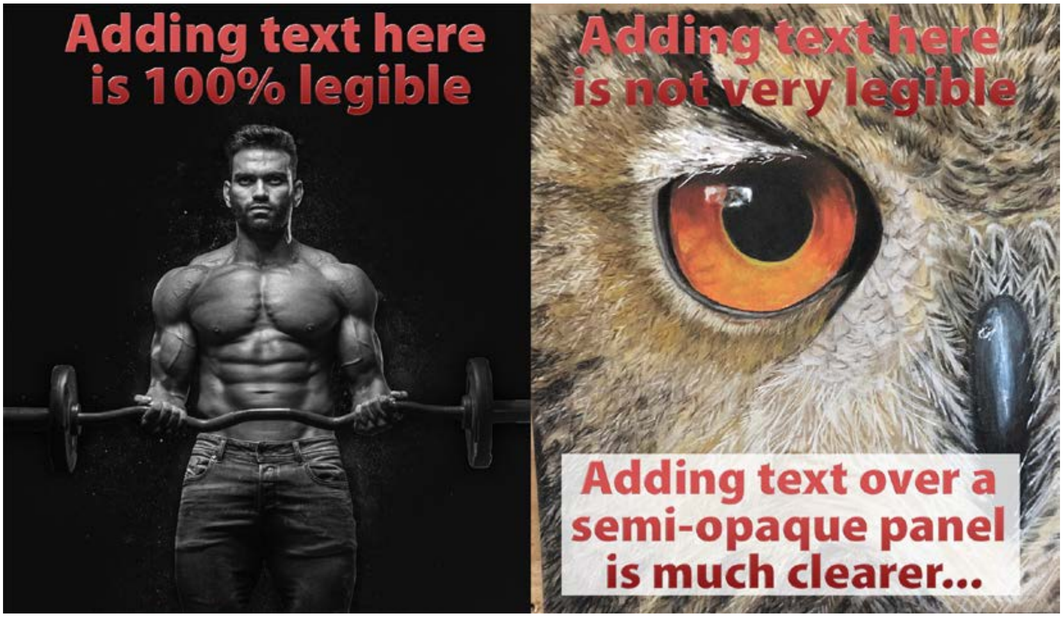
The graphics can then be resized, flipped, and rotated using the corner handles (as you would when transforming a regular picture). You can even add tonal edits to a lot of these graphics, provided that you *simplify them first* (that is, change the state from vector to pixel by right-clicking in the **Layers** panel and choosing **Simplify Layer** from the pop-out menu). They are very flexible.

You will find that most of these downloadable graphics are quite simplistic—these date back to the early days of Photoshop Elements, when it was very much the scrapbook hobbyist's plaything. Now, it's a far more sophisticated editing and design tool, so you might consider some of the effects to be a little dated and tired.

Text graphics

Adding text is one graphics tool that I really like because it's easy to add impressive-looking text directly into the image with a click of the mouse. OK—you do have to then go and click in the `Your Text Here` sentence to add your own words, but the font, color, bevel, shadow, and—in some cases—texture are already loaded into the design.

All you need to do is get the spelling right and make the text bigger or smaller to fit the page. Easy as falling off a log, and a lot less dangerous.

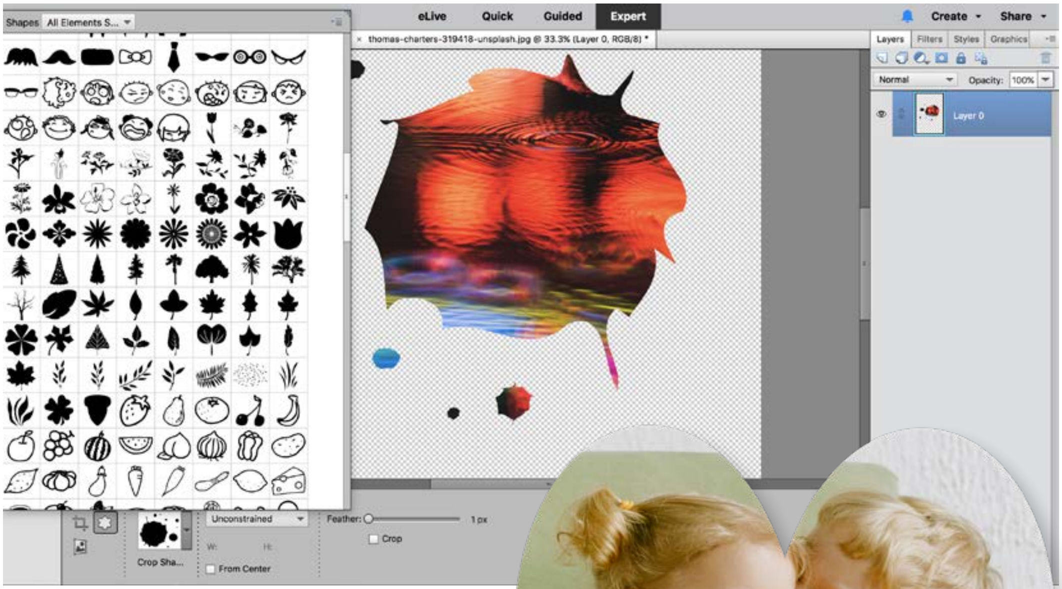

Adding text here is 100% legible
Adding text here is not very legible
Adding text over a semi-opaque panel is much clearer...

Aside from the vector-filled **Custom Shape** tool, Elements has a few regular shapes that are useful in a number of different applications. These include the **Rectangle**, **Rounded Rectangle**, **Ellipse**, **Polygon**, **Star**, and **Line** tools, which can be converted into an arrow graphic. Shapes can be helpful to photographers and designers by adding a rectangular shape under text to make it more legible, or by using the **Line** tool to direct the viewer to salient points in an illustration. It's not PowerPoint, neither is it Illustrator, but these tools provide an excellent starting point for those wanting to take their photographic design into a significantly more commercial arena.

The Cookie Cutter tool

Although not strictly a vector graphic, the **Cookie Cutter** tool is a cropping tool that uses vectors to create custom shapes instead of just removing bits of an image in a rectilinear fashion, as shown in the following screenshot.

I suspect that this tool harks back to the days when Elements 1.0 was just for moms and dads and their kids' school projects. That said, some of the cutting shapes are great fun and offer the user an opportunity for a different, neat, and quick look (I particularly like the **Crop Shapes**) to get away from the usually rectilinear photo edge by adding a very rough-cut, almost torn-edge look to any image.


Shapes
All Elements S...
eLive
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
thomas-charters-319418-unsplash.jpg @ 33.3% (Layer 0, RGB/8) *
Layers
Filters
Styles
Graphics
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 0
Crop Sha...
Unconstrained
W:
H:
From Center
Feather:
1 px
Crop

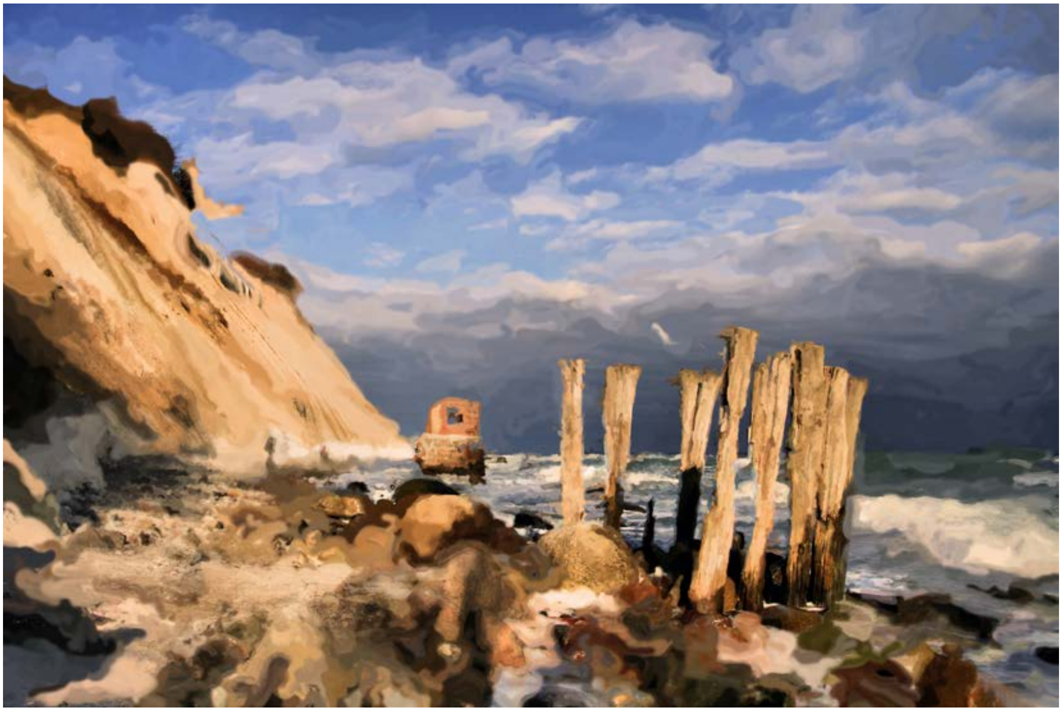
The **Cookie Cutter** tool is a fun feature to play around with. As you can see in the screenshot above, this tool comes with a huge range of preset shapes that can be then combined with one of your own photos. Photoshop Elements ships with a massive range of **Cookie Cutter** shapes that you can choose from. In this case, a paint splat shape is used on a photo of a city reflection.

Right: This is another **Cookie Cutter** shape—a heart. This tool is excellent for scrapbookers and all the family.

Impressionist Brush

Impressionist Brush is fun as it *sort of* copies your image and paints it directly back into the canvas with large, fuzzy brush strokes, producing something that passes for an impressionist *look*. You can broaden that *look* using its **Advanced** button, which takes you to a range of other brush stroke options, **Tolerance** settings, and more. I'm not sure what *Edouard Manet* or *Claude Monet* might have thought of this process, but with the right image plus textured inkjet paper to print on, the effects can be quite splendid.

I generally set **Impressionist Brush Tip** to a large size when painting the background, but make the brush smaller when working on the details – otherwise, the photo will just look out of focus or blurred. Another technique is to duplicate the layer first, apply the impressionist brush to the top layer, and then, with the **Eraser** tool (set to a low opacity of around 20%), carefully erase some of the top layer to reveal the *real* image beneath.

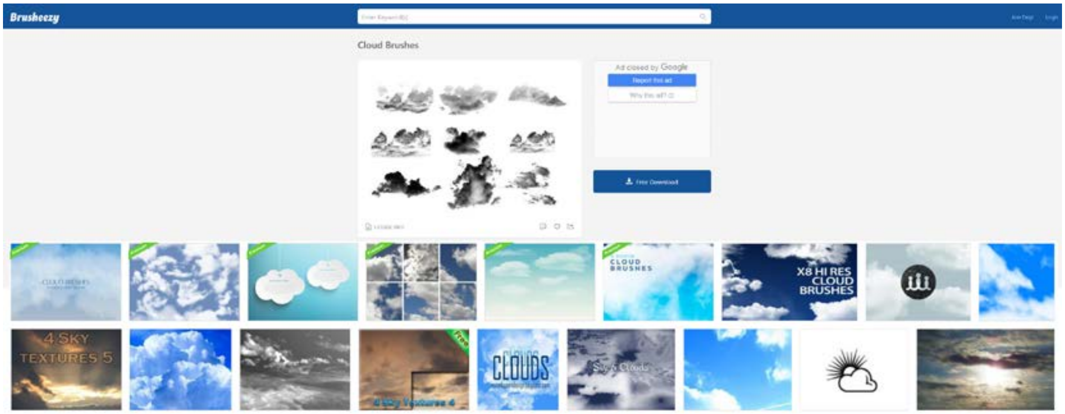


Custom brushes

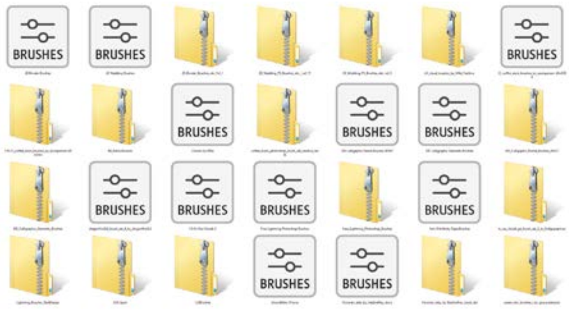
Readers might be a little surprised that Elements can be customized with a range of features, from third-party plugin software to custom brushes.

A custom brush is a tiny piece of software that describes the shape of a brush—it might be a traditional artist's style brush or it might be a brush tip made from a picture, as you'll see here. There are hundreds of (free and paid) brushes available online for download. Why would you bother? As there are more that 300 brushes already in Elements, I think you'd need to be after a very specific brush type to justify an online search. But, as mentioned, some brushes are made from pictures and it's this fact that opens up an entirely new set of options.

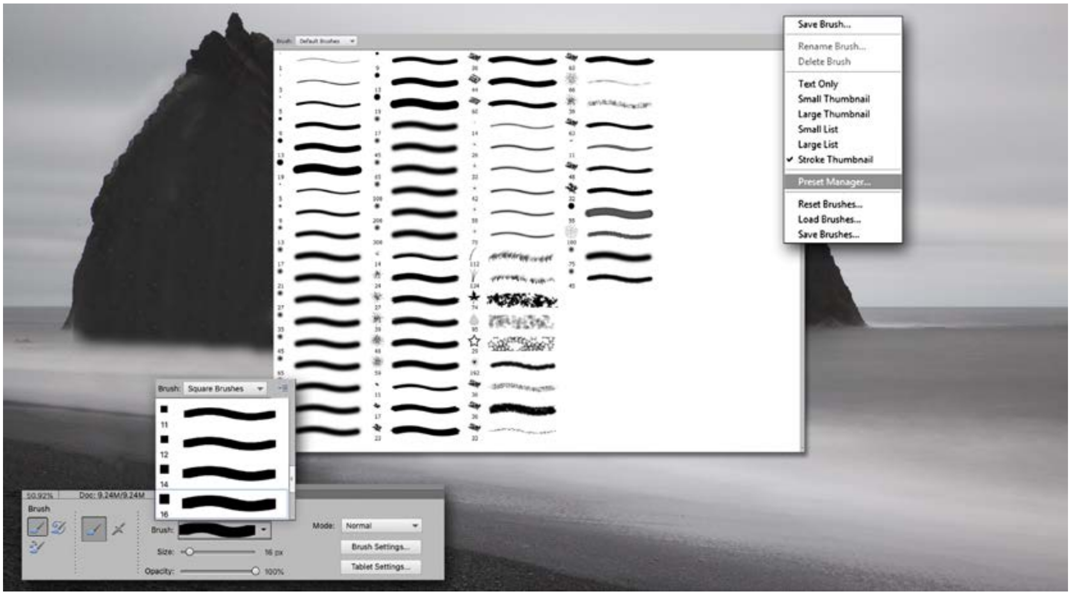
The following illustrations describe the process of looking for, locating, loading, and then using custom brushes to enhance your images. Sometimes, this might just be the addition of something small—a tiny cloud in an otherwise blue cloudless sky—or, at the other end of the scale, something more dramatic, such as lightning bolts striking the Earth.



I often use a site called **Brusheezy.com** as it has some fantastic **free brushes** – plus it seems to be 100% reliable (although please always be careful about exactly what you download off the internet!). This is a partial screenshot taken off the website after searching for "cloud" brushes. There are dozens to choose from.

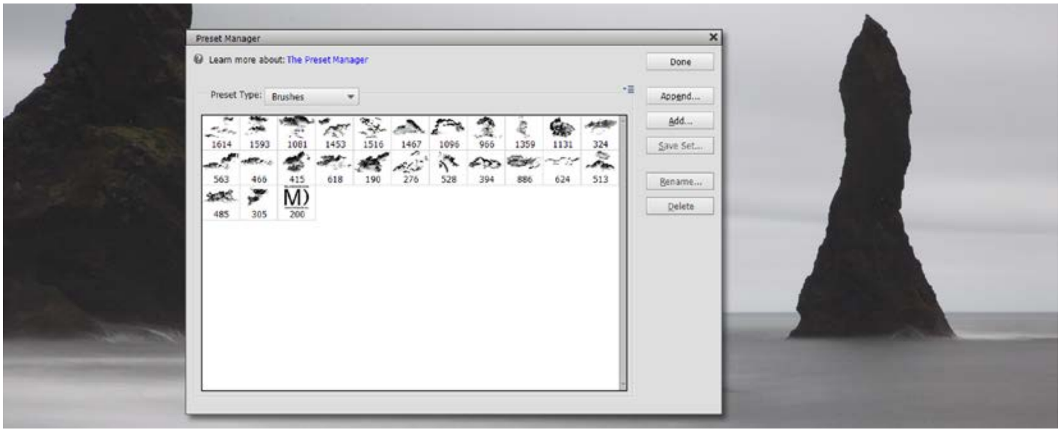


Left: This is the contents of my computer's **Downloads** folder – I download a lot of different brush sets to experiment with! Here, you can see that some are in zipped folders waiting to be used, while the black and white icons named **BRUSHES** are the unzipped `.ABR` **format** brush sets waiting to be loaded into Elements for use in a project.

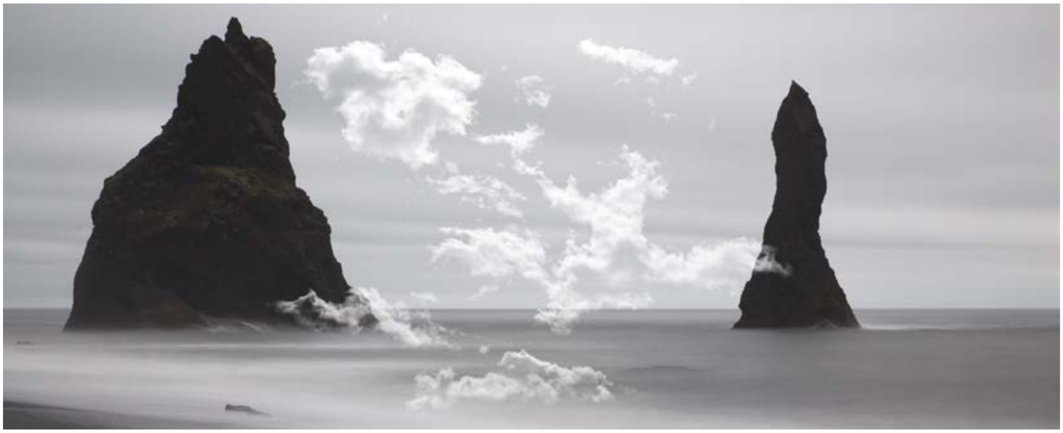

Save Brush...
Rename Brush...
Delete Brush
Text Only
Small Thumbnail
Large Thumbnail
Small List
Large List
✓ Stroke Thumbnail
Preset Manager...
Reset Brushes...
Load Brushes...
Save Brushes...
Brush: Square Brushes
Brush
Mode: Normal
Size: 16 px
Opacity: 100%
Brush Settings...
Tablet Settings...

Step one: Make your search for "free Photoshop brushes" online. Most are designed for Photoshop CC—but they seem to work perfectly with Elements. Choose a sample, hit the download button, and note that it downloads into your downloads folder (Mac or PC).

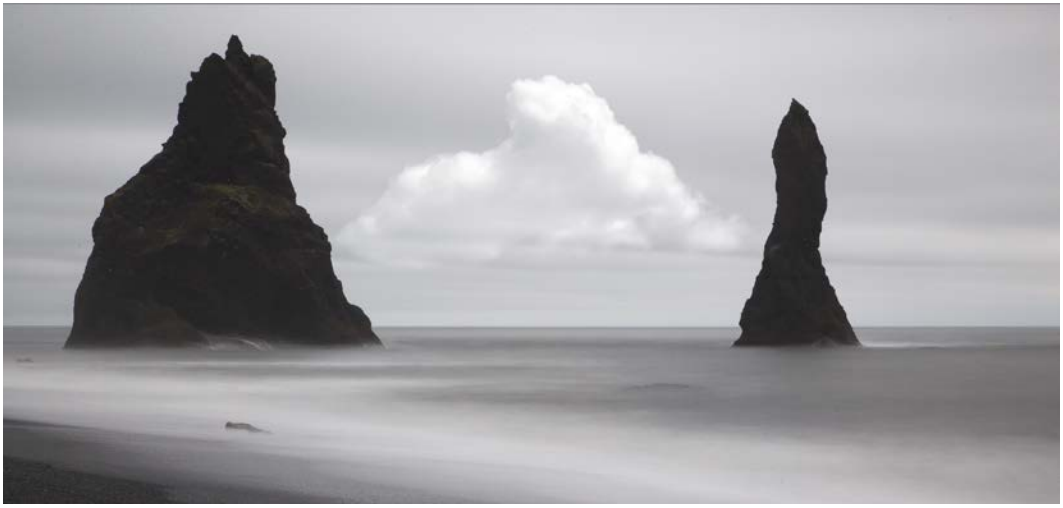
Step two: Choose the **Brush tool** from the **Tool Bar** and from the brush style pop-up menu, click the tiny icon in the top right of the pull-out panel. In the illustration above, I have imposed the full brush panel, complete with a pop-out menu (upper right). You can choose **Load Brushes** from this menu or, as shown here, open **Preset Manager** (below), into which you can import new brushes.


Preset Manager
Learn more about: The Preset Manager
Preset Type: Brushes
Done
Append...
Add...
Save Set...
Rename...
Delete
1614
1593
1081
1453
1516
1467
1096
966
1359
1131
324
563
466
415
618
190
276
528
394
886
624
513
485
305
200

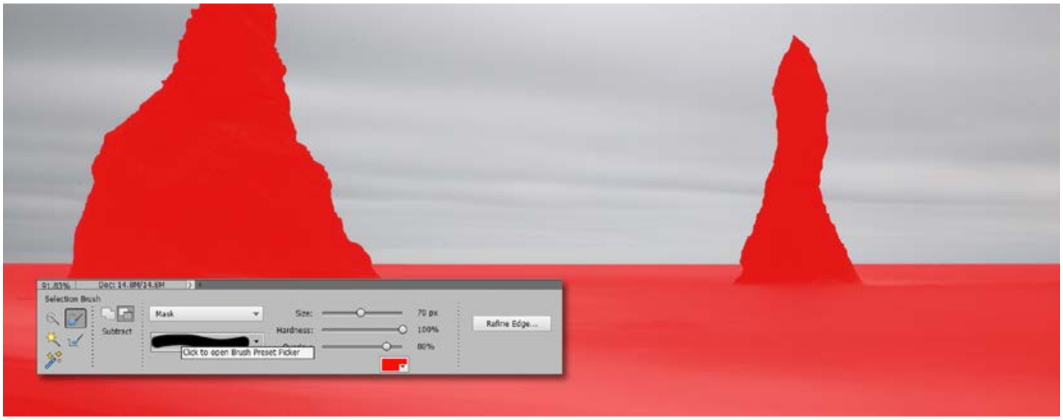
Step three: This is **Preset Manager** (it holds and manages all Brushes, Swatches, Gradients, Styles, Patterns, and Effects). Press **Add**, navigate to the `Downloads` folder, find your newly downloaded brush, and click **Open**. It loads into this window. No need to do anything else—but you can rename brushes, or entire brush sets, from this panel and delete those that you don't like or don't think you'd ever use in order to simplify your (growing) collection.



Step four: These cloud brushes are made from photos (of clouds) scaled down in size, rendered in black and white, and saved in a special **.ABR** file format using Photoshop CC. Note that brushes can also be made in Elements: **Edit>Define brush from Selection**. The installed cloud brushes are large (brush width is denoted in pixels underneath the brush thumbnail). These can be made smaller or larger, as you can with any brush in Elements, either by changing the pixel width in the **Tool Options** panel, or by tapping the left and right square brackets (smaller/larger). If you click and drag, as you would when creating a brushstroke, the cloud image drags across the canvas creating a smeared line, which isn't what's wanted here. Click once in the picture to add a single image, not a brushstroke. Here a single click has placed a cloud image over my seascape. The cloud is realistic but its positioning is not.



Step five - try another brush from the brush set: In this example, the selected cloud brush is smaller than the previous illustration so the single cloud appears to fit neatly between the two rock stacks, exactly where you might expect to find a cloud – in the sky. In this example, I reduced the opacity of the brush slightly (to 85%) before clicking in the picture to make it blend better with the tones in the original sky.



Mask

Size: 70 px

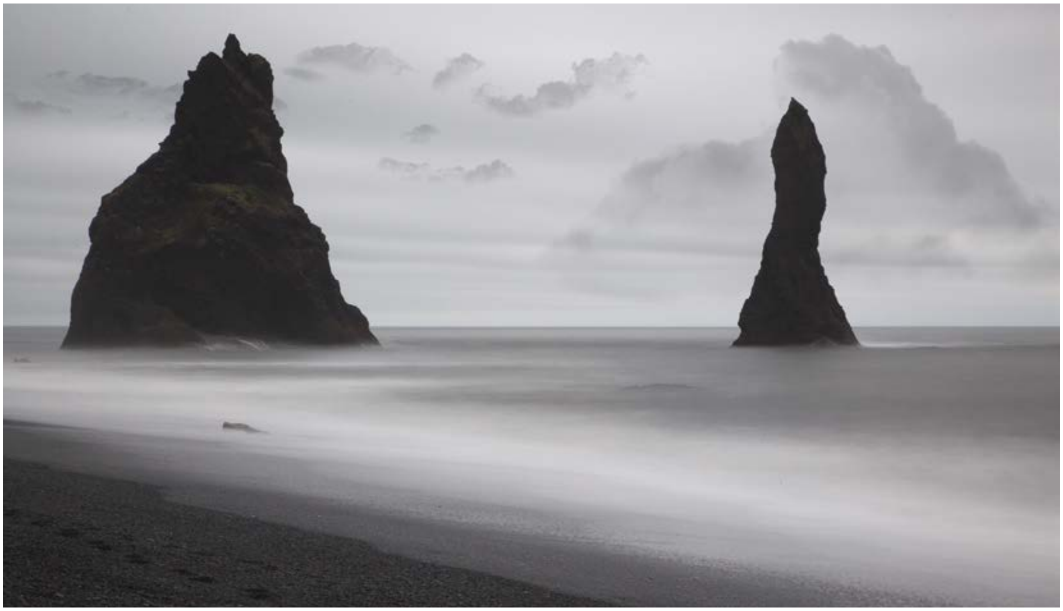
Hardness: 100%

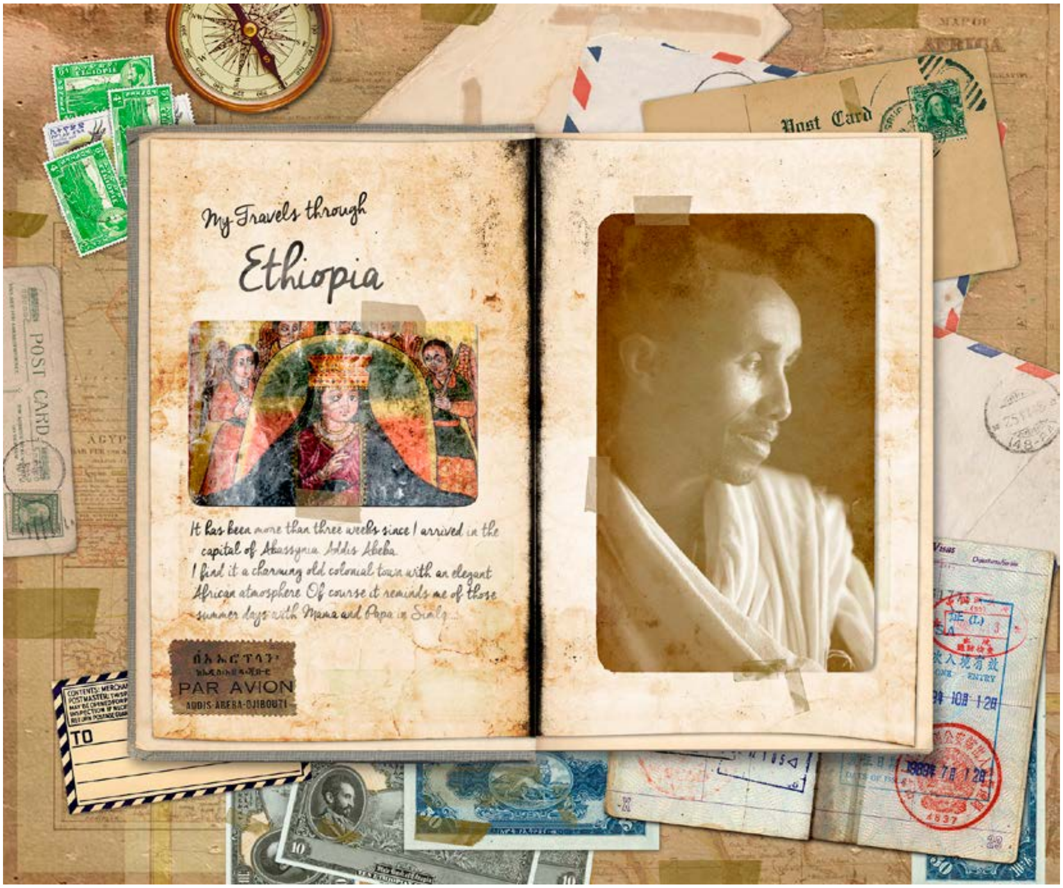
80%

Step six: One way to make this ***fake*** cloud appear more realistic is to **integrate it** behind the subject – in this example, behind the two dark rocks.

Because the sky was pale in the original, I can easily select it using the **Magic Wand** tool. Doing so means that if I now stamp my cloud brush into that sky area, the image will only appear in the sky, not on top of the dark rocks sticking up into the scene. This is because they are protected by the selection (this screen grab shows the extent of the selection in (red) **Mask** mode). **Mask** mode in Elements is the same as the Quick Mask in Adobe Photoshop CC and is a terrific way of checking the accuracy of the selection. The red mask can also be edited using a brush to extend the mask or with the eraser brush tool so that you can trim bits off it.

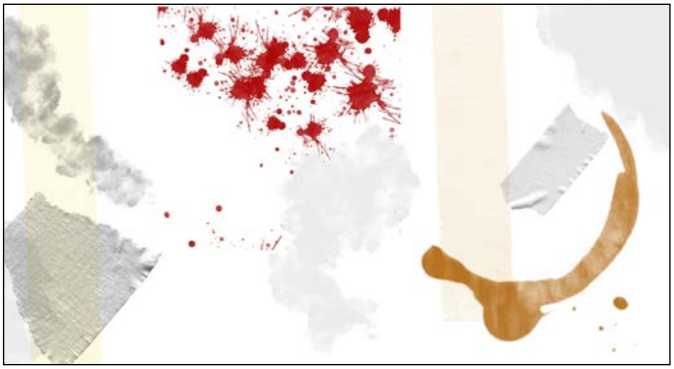
Below: With the final cloud stamp in position behind the selection, the finished image looks 100% more realistic – effectively created with just one brush click!




My Travels through
Ethiopia
It has been more than three weeks since I arrived in the capital of Abassynia Addis Abeba
I find it a charming old colonial town with an elegant African atmosphere Of course it reminds me of those summer days with Mama and Papa in Sicily...
PAR AVION
ADDIS-ABEBA-DJIBOUTI
Post Card
POST CARD
TO

Custom brush example #2: As you will appreciate while searching for "**free Photoshop brushes,**" there are hundreds of other types of brush sets that you can download and incorporate in your artistic projects.

In fact, you might have seen a range of these brush effects in *Chapter 6*, *Advanced Techniques – Layers and Masking*, such as this illustration for a traveler's journal, which was created from over 40 different visual assets. This also included a number of special custom brush sets that I had sourced from the web. These included: **coffee stains**, **watermarks**, paint splatters, and **sticky tape**, all of which were incorporated into this image.

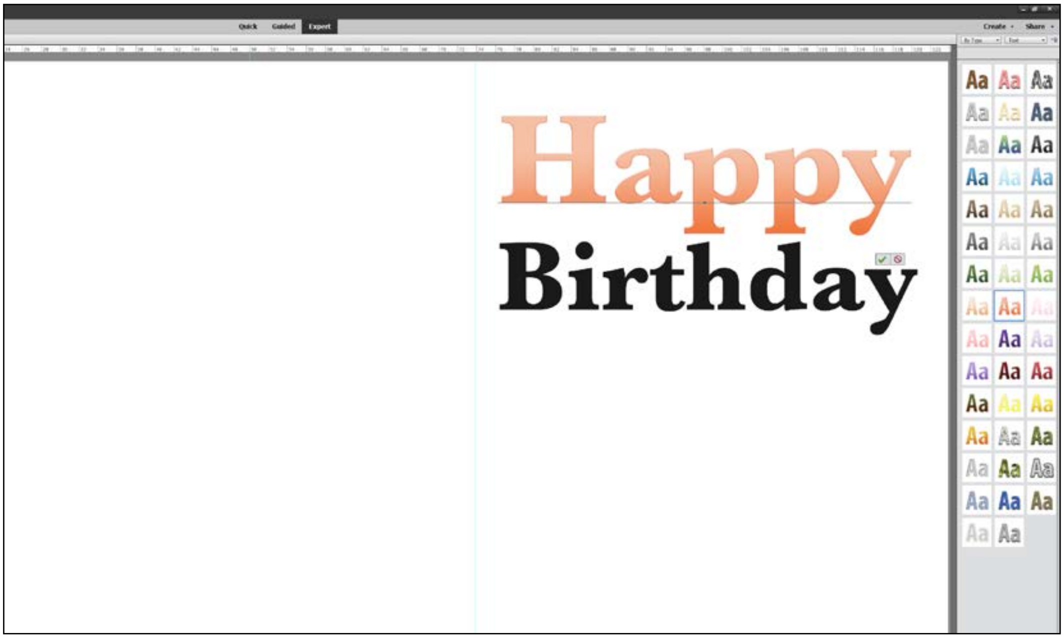


Left: Here are a few more examples of custom brush effects including tape, smoke, and my favourite, coffee stains.

Adobe vectors

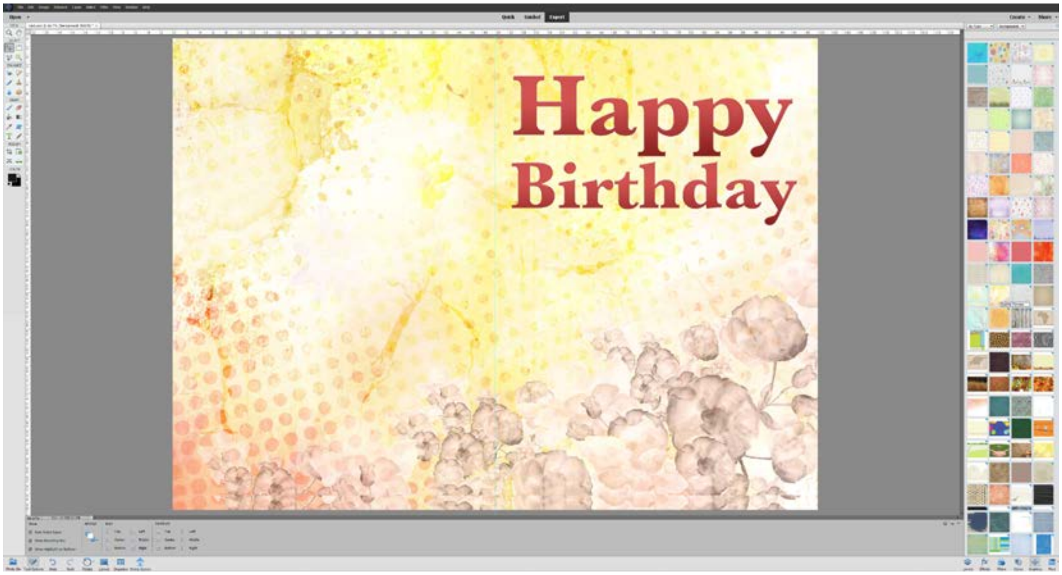
As we have already seen, Photoshop Elements comes packed with **vector clip art** that you can use in your various projects. Actually, these assets are not in the Elements application when it's first downloaded, but every time you pick a vector item from the **Graphics** panel, it will automatically download from Adobe. Since these are vector graphics, their size is tiny, so they take no time to download. Vectors are made from mathematical formulae and not pixels. Photographs are made up of individual pixels, so they take up a lot more space.

To appreciate just how easy vectors are to work with, let's make a **custom greeting card**:

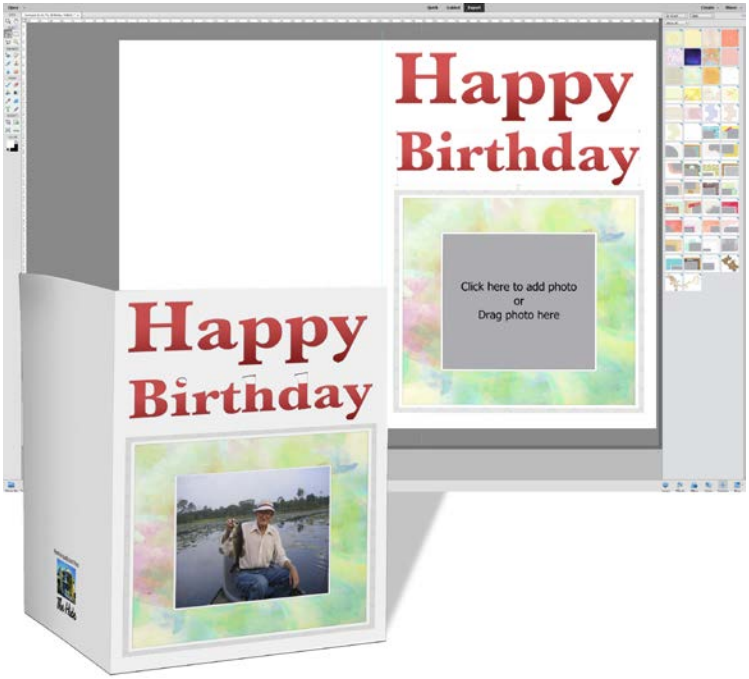


Step one: To make your own custom greeting card, create a new document (**File**>**New>Blank Document**). Before you start the design process, I recommend that you search for envelopes that match your cards. It's annoying if you go ahead and design a card and then find that no one makes envelopes to match the size of the card (yes, it's happened to me a couple of times). Find an envelope, measure its proportions, and create a new document that's twice its width or height, depending on whether you want the fold line at the top, or on the left-hand edge of the card.

Step two: You can add some nice preset text effects using the **Text** sub menu in the **Graphics** panel. Double-clicking the text style from the listing on the right-hand side immediately adds it to the document open on the page as Your Text Here. Click inside this text to type in your own greeting.



Step three: As an example, I chose **Backgrounds** from the drop-down menu, which is at the top right in the **Graphics** panel, and chose one of the thumbnails to automatically download and install it into my document (one problem I have with this otherwise good feature is that it's hard to see what the design looks like. But then, because it's only a small file, you can try one, and if it's no good, undo and try more).

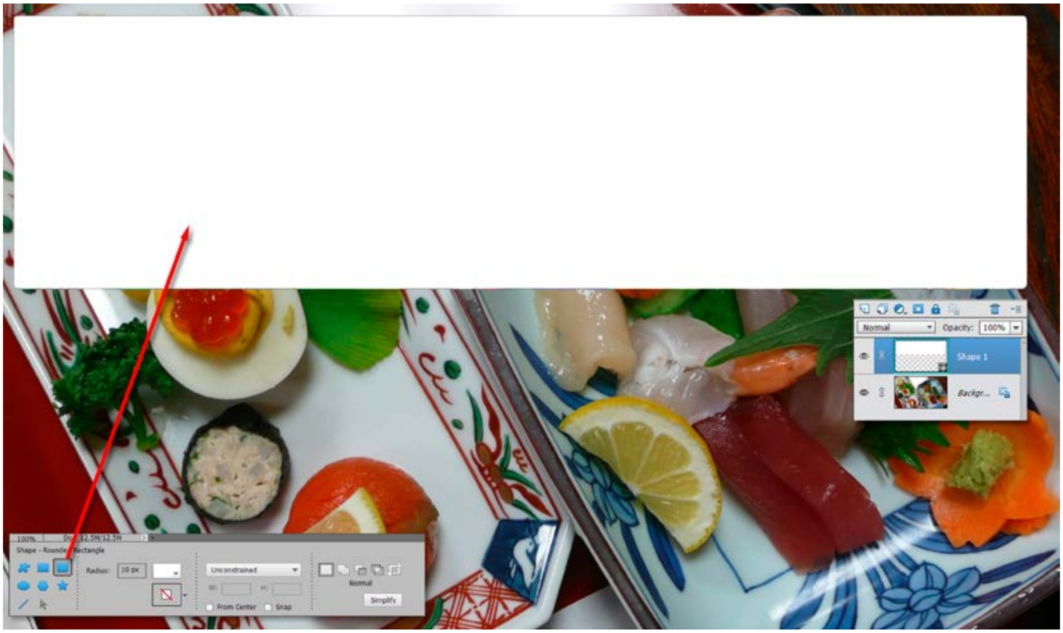


Step four - adding a frame: If textured backgrounds are not your thing, you can also drag entire designs, plus picture window frames, into your custom artwork. It's a bit hit-and-miss because some of the designs look different once they're in place. If this happens, undo, and try another style before saving and printing it on your local inkjet or laser device. I chose a picture frame to slot under the Happy Birthday text—then added a picture in the space provided to further personalize the design.

Custom vector illustrations

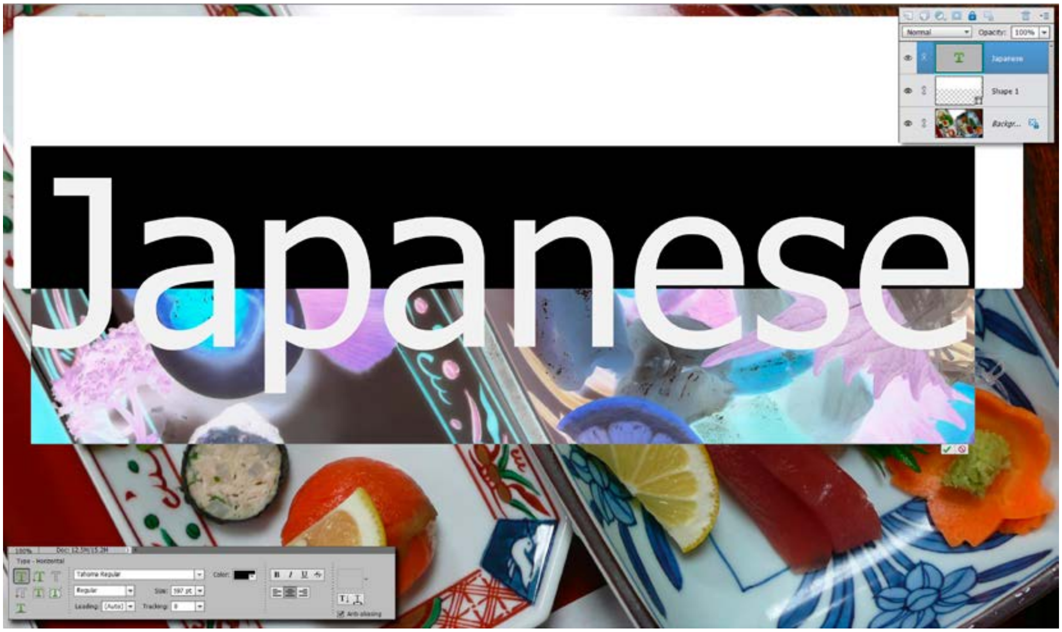
Photoshop Elements has an amazing range of **vector tools** – shapes, text, and more. The beauty of these forms is that, since they are essentially made up of nothing more than a mathematical formula, they occupy very little space, and can be resized to any size with no loss of quality.

In these illustrations, I am making a design for a book on Japanese food, experimenting with a custom font (**Paper Cuts**, downloaded for this project), as well as vector shapes as text boxes, plus a range of special effects, such as **Drop Shadows**.

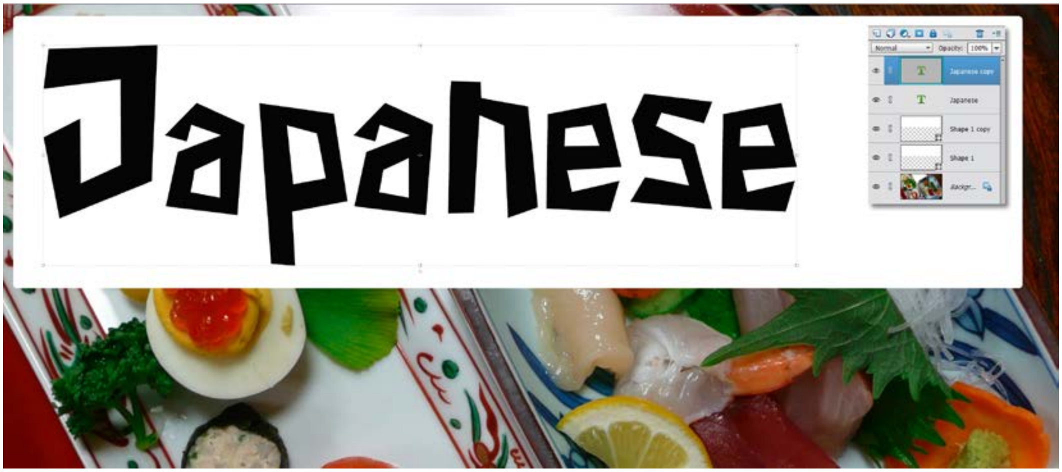

Normal
Opacity: 100%
Shape 1
Backgr...
Shape - Rounded Rectangle
Radius: 10 px
Unconstrained
W:
H:
From Center
Snap
Normal
Simplify

Step one: In this example, I'm using scalable vectors to create a simple page design for a book on Japanese food. I have the main image open and have chosen a rounded edge panel as a starting point.

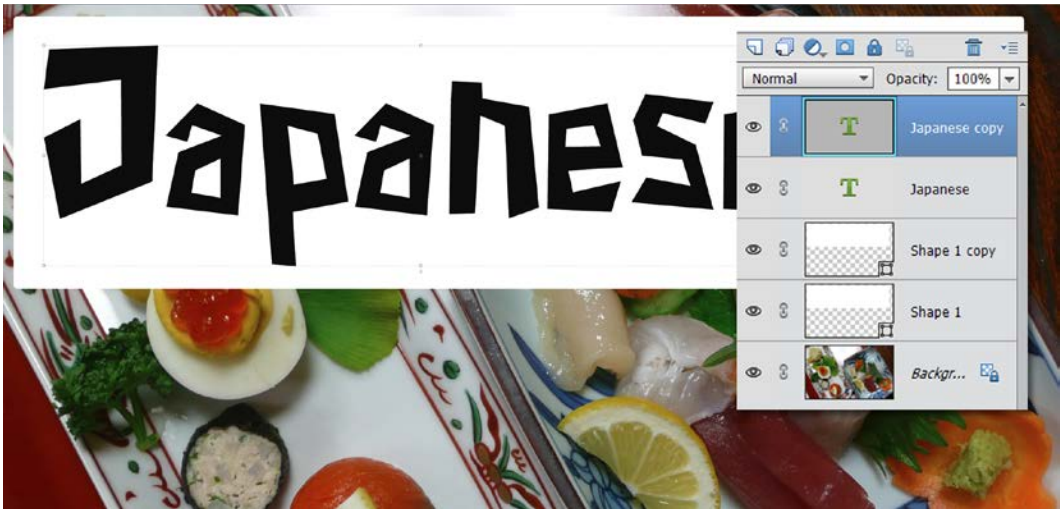
Choose **Custom Shapes** from the **Tool Bar**, select the **Rounded Rectangle Tool** (*U*), then click, hold, and drag into the image to add this vector shape to the document. It will go into its own layer automatically. Note that it doesn't matter if this is appearing at the right proportion or size because it can be resized at any time.


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Japanese
Shape 1
Backgr...
Japanese
Tahoma Regular
Regular
Color:
Size:
Leading: (Auto)
Tracking: 0
Anti-aliasing

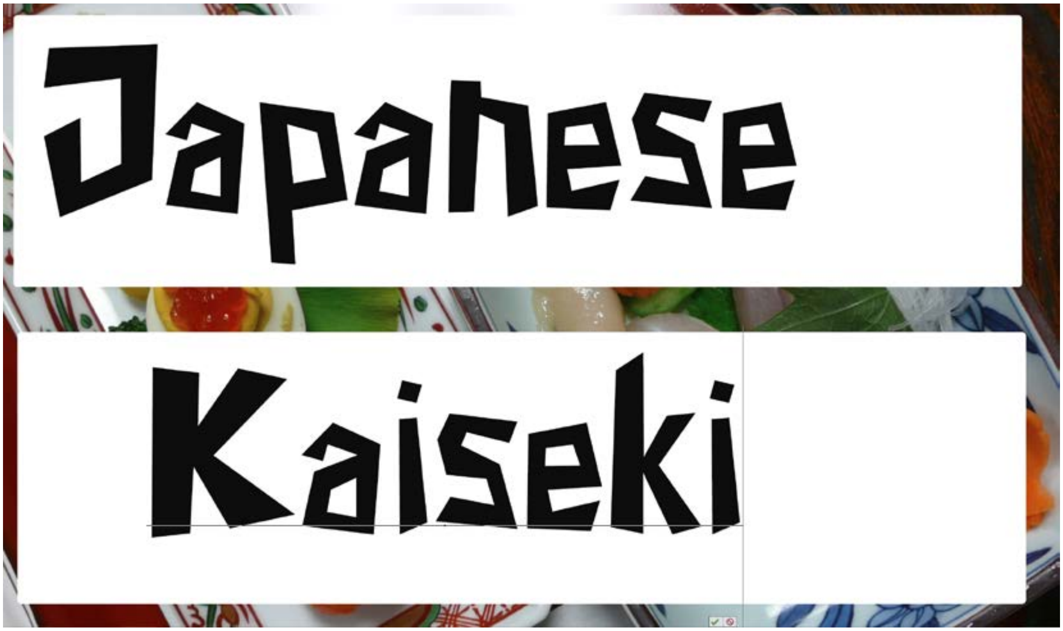
Step two: I added the first text layer. There are now three layers in this file: the background foodie shot, the vector shape layer, and the type layer at the top. At this stage, the font is just the default font. I changed the default font to a custom one called Paper Cuts (from a free site called `www.dafont.com`), which suits the Japanese theme. Note that the **Rounded Rectangle** tool acts like a text box, into which text can be typed. This can be rather restrictive, especially if you're using a non-standard font, as I was here.


Japanese
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Japanese copy
Japanese
Shape 1 copy
Shape 1
Backgr...

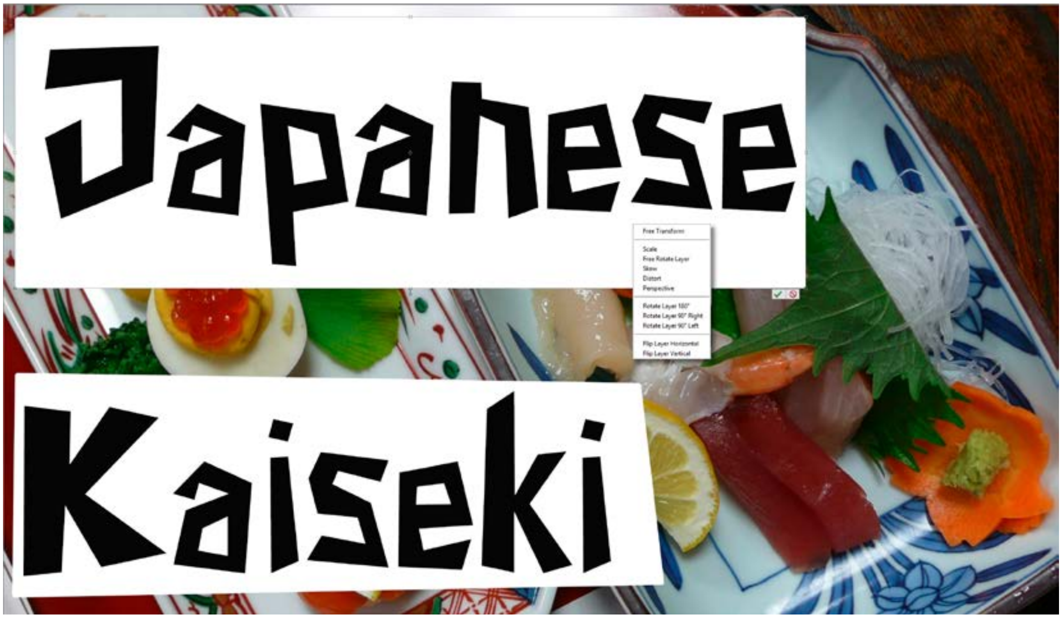
Step three: In this instance, I created the new type layer by clicking in the main image away from the Rectangular panel, then dragged it to the top, ensuring that it was independent of the vector panel beneath it.


Japanese
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Japanese copy
Japanese
Shape 1 copy
Shape 1
Backgr...

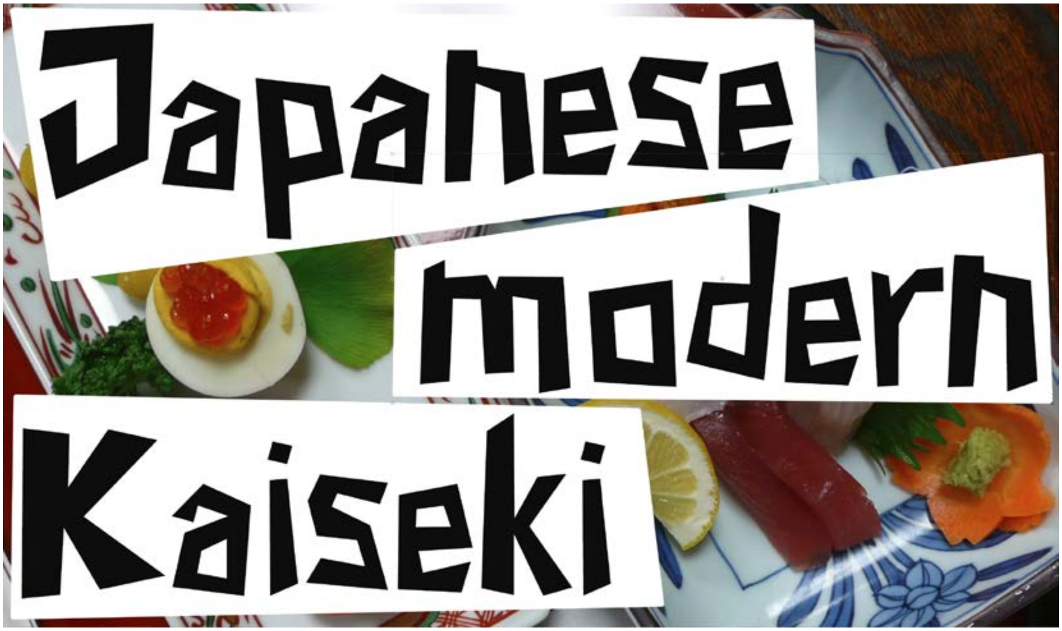
Step four: I duplicated both text and vector layers. This is a handy shortcut – by duplicating these layers, I don't have to go back to the **Tool Bar**, select the **Custom Shape** tool, choose the **Rounded Rectangle** tool, and draw another shape or text layer. It's quicker to duplicate what you already have and then adapt the duplicate.

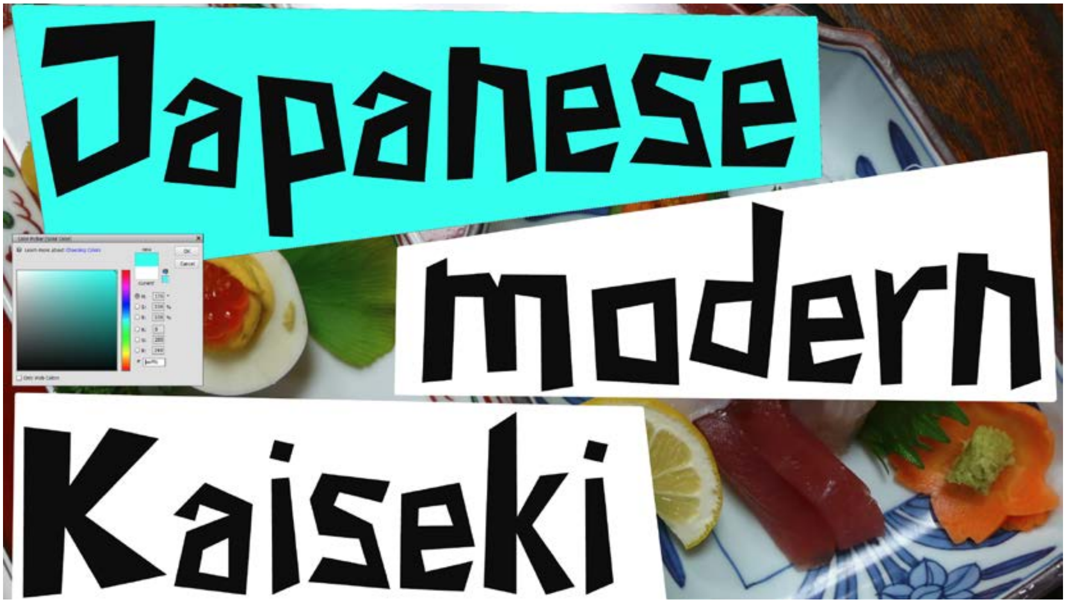

Japanese
Kaiseki

Step five: I've dragged both newly duplicated layers to the bottom of the page using the **Move** tool, and with the **Type** tool, edited the copied text layer so that it reads **Kaiseki** (an exquisitely presented traditional Japanese multi-course lunch or dinner). This process is much faster than trying to create a new rounded rectangle panel plus a new type layer.

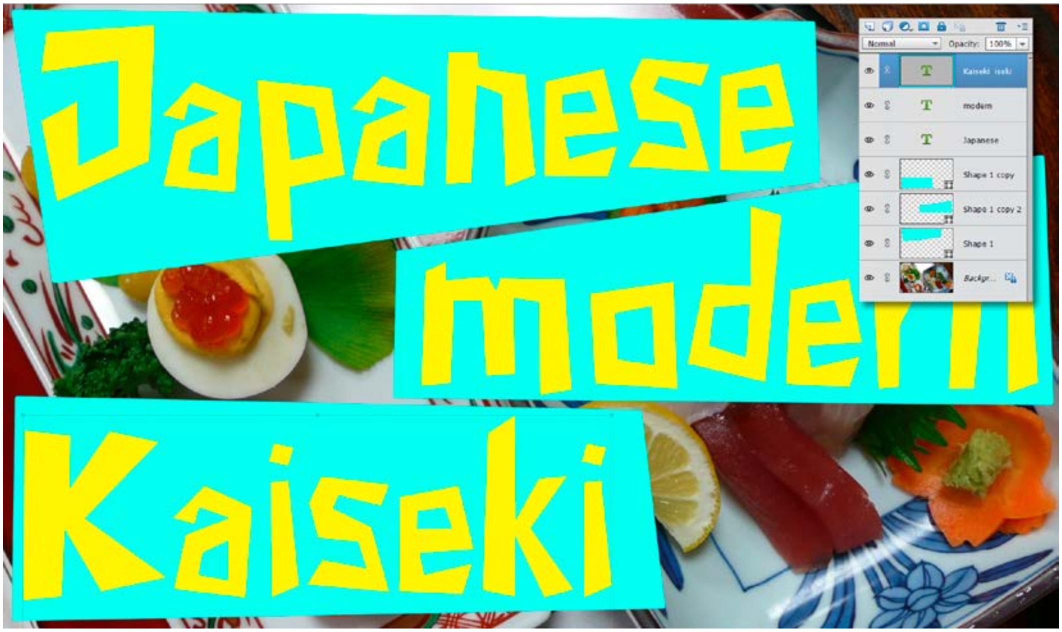

Japanese
Kaiseki
Free Transform
Scale
Free Rotate Layer
Skew
Distort
Perspective
Rotate Layer 180°
Rotate Layer 90° Right
Rotate Layer 90° Left
Flip Layer Horizontal
Flip Layer Vertical

Step six: To make the design more retro, I transformed the rectangular shapes. *Ctrl/Cmd + T* puts the vector layer into transform mode (confirmed by the appearance of corner handles around the shape). Right-click inside the transform box to access the menu to change from **Scale** to **Distort**, **Skew**, or **Perspective**. I used **Distort** because it allows you to drag one corner only – which I did to reshape the rectangular proportions, as you can see below.

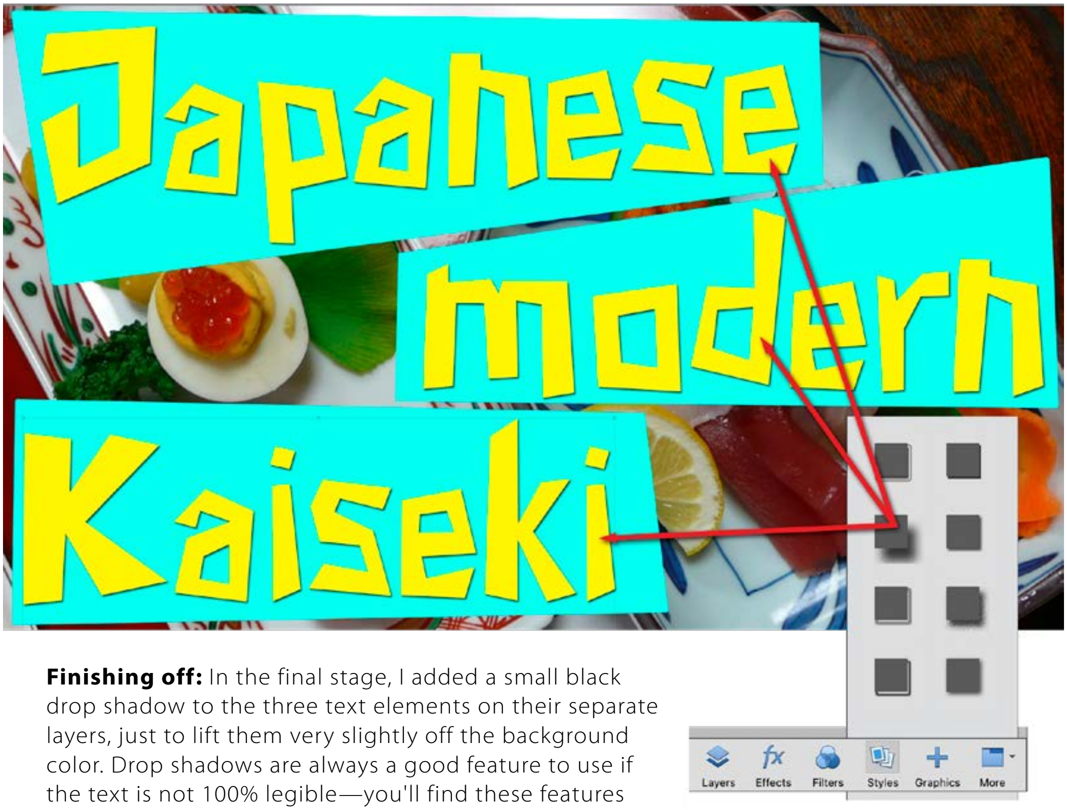

Japanese
modern
Kaiseki


Japanese
modern
Kaiseki

Step seven: I duplicated the vector and text layer one more time to add the third text component to the design. Double-clicking the vector layer thumbnail brings up the **Color Picker**, allowing you to add any color you like to that panel:


Japanese
modern
Kaiseki
Normal
Opacity: 100%
modern
Japanese
Shape 1 copy
Shape 1 copy 2
Shape 1
Backgr...

Step eight: Adding color to the text is a slightly lengthier process. Select the text first, then choose a color from the **Options** panel. Or click in the **Color Picker** and add a color from there.


Japanese
modern
Kaiseki
Layers
Effects
Filters
Styles
Graphics
More

Finishing off: In the final stage, I added a small black drop shadow to the three text elements on their separate layers, just to lift them very slightly off the background color. Drop shadows are always a good feature to use if the text is not 100% legible—you'll find these features located in the **Styles** panel.

Japanese
modern
Kaiseki

Vector Graphics – key points

Infinitely scalable, with no loss of clarity

Contain smoother edges than pixel-based images

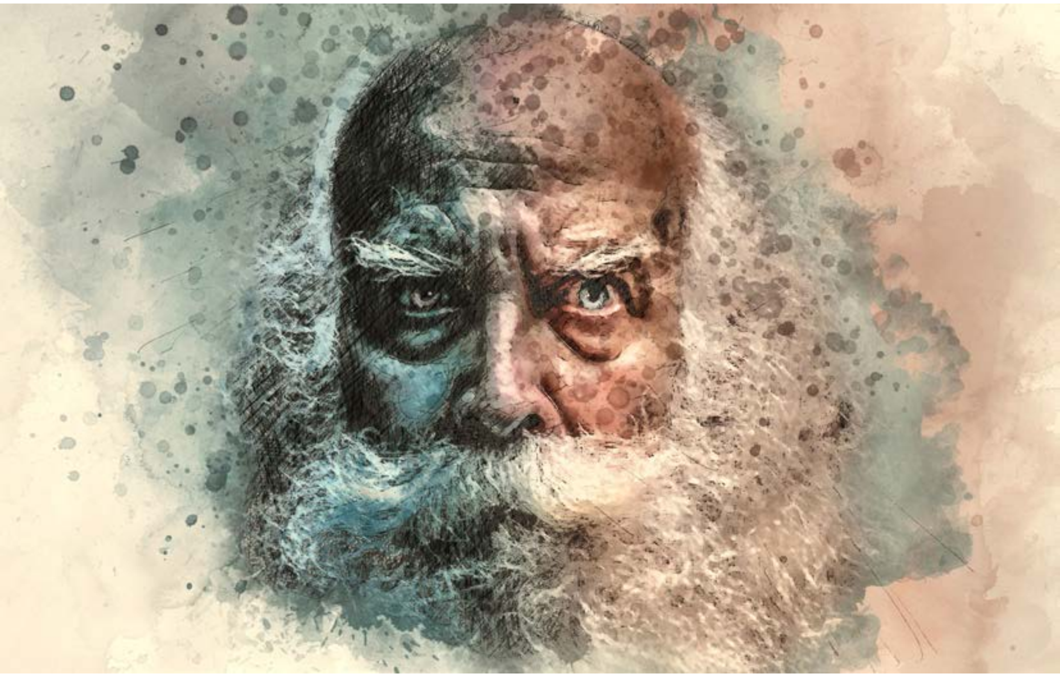
Small file sizes – fast to save and download from the internet

Excellent for web use

Excellent for photo books, illustration, school projects, and much more

Using a graphics tablet

We have already discussed several uses for the **Brush** tool, notably in creating **layer masks**, in previous chapters, but it can also be used as a real *brush*. To do this, you really need to be very adept at drawing with a mouse, or you might consider buying a **graphics tablet** or **graphics monitor**.

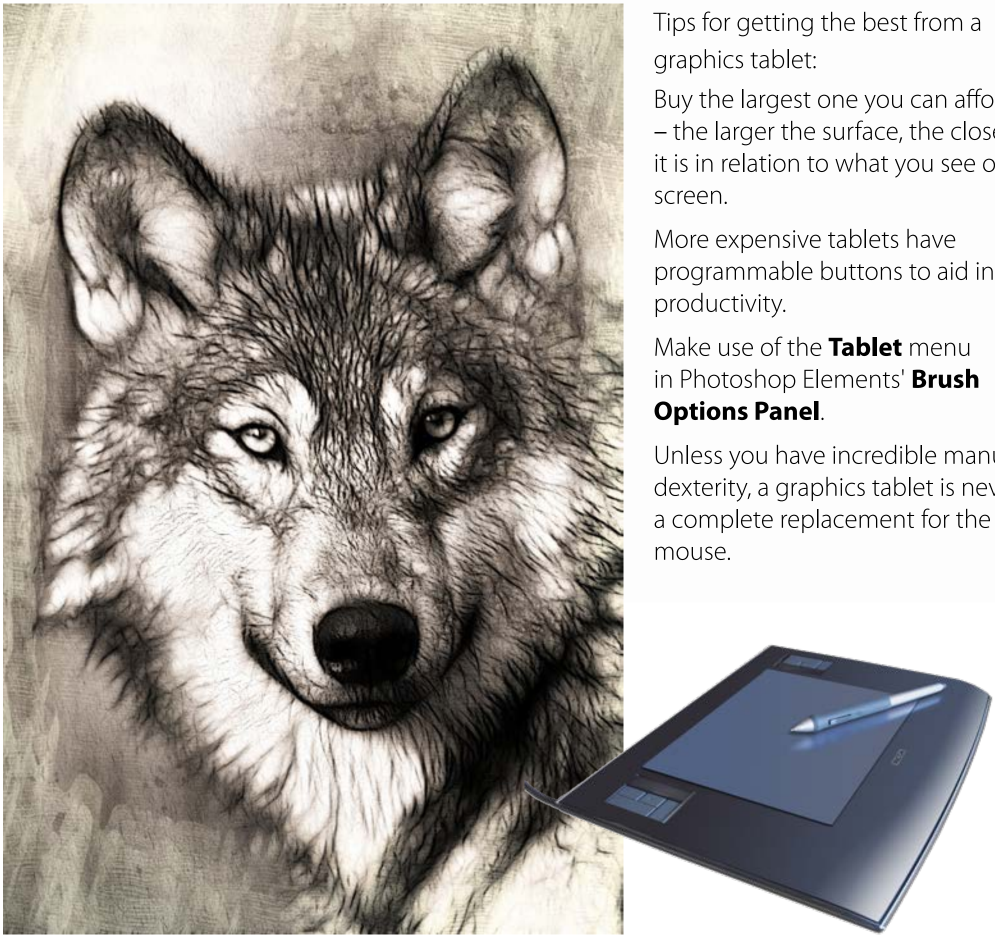


Tablet devices are perfect for artists because, instead of drawing with a mouse, you use a **pen stylus**, which is roughly the same size and shape as a *real* pen, and draw onto the tablet as if it were the screen itself. Interestingly, tablets are also available as graphics monitors – digital screens onto which you can draw – but these are significantly more expensive.

Tablets come in a staggering range of sizes, though the larger the better since they provide more drawing accuracy and features. But even a $50 model will serve you well. One leading name in tablets is **Wacom**, which produces a complete range of products, from entry-level to expensive $700+ professional versions. If you just need a different and more accurate way to control your mouse actions, it's probably best to invest in a small or medium-sized tablet, from a less expensive company, such as **Huion,** which might set you back only $30 or so.

Bluetooth-enabled models are slightly more expensive than non-Bluetooth models. If you can survive with a USB cable connection, you could save $40 or so. Larger models (8.5 x 5.5 inches and up) are easier to use because the active part of the tablet reflects the size of the screen more accurately. At the top end of town are tablets specially designed to work with real paper. Clip your favorite paper to the tablet and use the electronic stylus to either trace or draw through the paper to create an electronic file. Expect to pay over $600 for one of these bad boys.

If your work is 100% reliant on your penmanship (and your boss is OK with buying one for you), consider the top-of-the-range monitor tablet – essentially a 4K screen that you draw, design, and animate on. These are beautiful products, but at $1,000+ for a top-of-the-range model, they might be out of the price range of most enthusiast photographers. Wacom is possibly the most costly brand, but there are plenty of less pricey players coming into this market, so prices for these devices are dropping.



Tips for getting the best from a graphics tablet:

Buy the largest one you can afford – the larger the surface, the closer it is in relation to what you see on screen.

More expensive tablets have programmable buttons to aid in productivity.

Make use of the **Tablet** menu in Photoshop Elements' **Brush Options Panel**.

Unless you have incredible manual dexterity, a graphics tablet is never a complete replacement for the mouse.

Keyboard shortcuts

Here's a list of some of the best (or most appropriate) keyboard shortcuts for this chapter:

- Create a new document: **File**>**New**>**Blank Document**.
- Zoom in: *Ctrl*/*Cmd* + "+".
- Zoom out: *Ctrl*/*Cmd* + "-".
- Fit image to page: *Ctrl*/*Cmd* + *0* (zero).
- **Grid** (repeat the same to remove it): (*Ctrl*/*Cmd* + *'*).
- Show and hide the Guides: (*Ctrl*/*Cmd* + *;*).
- Use this keyboard shortcut to temporarily hide the selection line of marching ants. Repeat to show it: *Ctrl*/*Cmd* + *H*.
- Puts any object on a layer into **Transform** (resize) mode: *Ctrl*/*Cmd* + *T*.
- Hold the *Shift* key down while drawing with the **Elliptical** tools, **Rectangular** tools, or any of the Custom Shapes to lock the proportions.

Summary

So far in this book, we have discovered how this software application not only produces some outstanding results on regular image files, but also that it can be used very effectively as a graphic design and illustration tool.

We have discovered that working with vectors can be a completely different experience to pixel-based photos because, as we saw in this chapter, vectors can be infinitely scalable – while raster images cannot.

What's more, even if you have no desire to become the world's best designer, you can still use Photoshop Elements to produce simple artworks, add special filter effects to images, add text to your projects, and take your editing capabilities to the next level with custom brushes.

In the next chapter, we'll look at finalizing the edited image by starting with a recap on the best resolution settings for social media and the printed page, saving images specifically for the web, several methods for sharpening images, exporting the files, singly or en masse, and finally look at how to process image files in bulk using the very handy but much underused **Process Multiple Files** feature.

9

Exporting the Finished Work

Having successfully navigated the often-complex world of advanced editing and illustration using Photoshop Elements, this chapter is all about setting up those images to achieve the best results when exporting your work to online resources, or to print.

To start, we will revisit the concept of **resolution** just so you understand the differences between pixels and dots per inch, compression, and web display speed, because all of these factors can have a massive impact on how your work appears on **Facebook**, **Flickr**, or in a luxuriant **digital photo book**. We also cover the complex subject of printing as well as sharpening techniques before finishing off with two of Elements' best batching tools: Export as New Files and my favourite, Process as Multiple Files.

What you'll learn from this chapter:

- Online - web and blogging
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Flickr
- Print resolution
- Local printing
- Print setup
- Save for Web
- Unsharp Mask
- Shake Reduction tool
- High Pass sharpening
- General sharpen filters
- Export as New Files
- Process Multiple Files

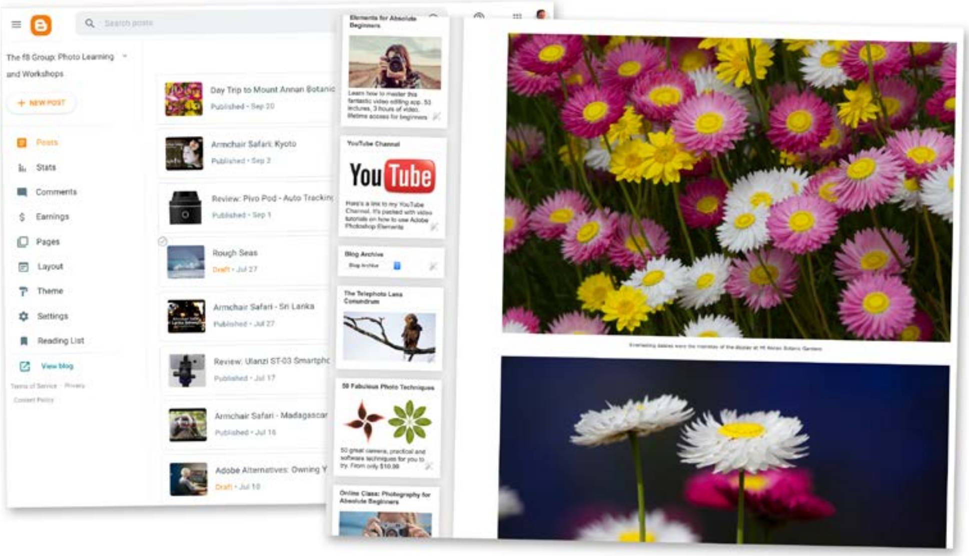
Online – web and blogging

Online display is typically 72 **dots per inch** (**dpi**), a standard resolution for everything online. Since this is **fixed number**, the more pixels there are present in the file, the larger, physically, it will be displayed.

However, most websites (and blogs) have a finite size for displaying images, which is impacted by the design intent, the speed of the internet connection, and storage space, but, ultimately, by the company offering the service. I use **Google Blogger**, which is free. It offers several image display sizes, topping out at only 640 pixels wide for the largest image view—at the default of 72dpi.

So, if the resolution (number of pixels) in your file exceeds the number that's needed to display an image—at a fixed size and resolution—it's essentially pixels wasted, and might slow the display onscreen significantly (and potentially turn your audience off).

If you use a commercial site, such as **Google Blogger** (pictured), the file size is automatically restricted in the upload process. But if it's your own domain, you can technically upload files of any size, although there's likely to be little benefit.


Search posts
The f8 Group: Photo Learning and Workshops
+ NEW POST
Posts
Stats
Comments
Earnings
Pages
Layout
Theme
Settings
Reading List
View blog
Day Trip to Mount Annan Botanic
Published · Sep 20
Armchair Safari: Kyoto
Published · Sep 2
Review: Pivo Pod - Auto Tracking
Published · Sep 1
Rough Seas
Draft · Jul 27
Armchair Safari - Sri Lanka
Published · Jul 27
Review: Ulanzi ST-03 Smartphc
Published · Jul 17
Armchair Safari - Madagascar
Published · Jul 16
Adobe Alternatives: Owning Y
Draft · Jul 10
Elements for Absolute Beginners
YouTube Channel
YouTube
Blog Archive
The Telephoto Lens Conundrum
50 Fabulous Photo Techniques
Online Class: Photography for Absolute Beginners

Note also that uploading full-resolution images might tempt less-upstanding members of the public to steal your work by downloading the high-quality file and using it in some way for their own profit. It happens.

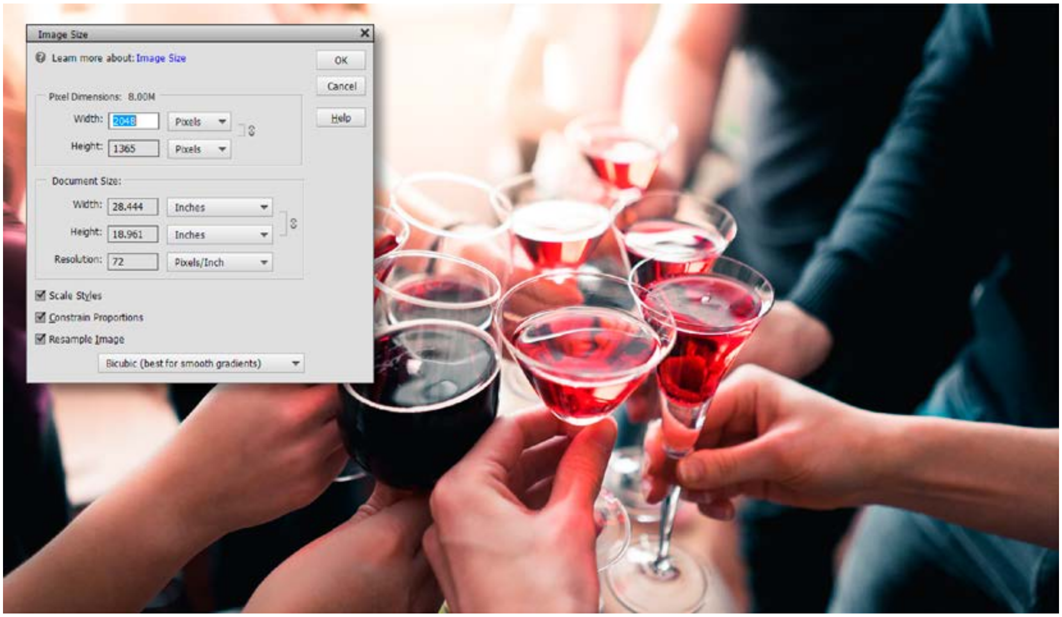
Later in this chapter, we will discuss using the **Save for Web** utility, a feature that's designed specifically to optimize file sizes, as well as download and display speed.

So, if your images are destined for the web (you might have your own domain and website), the ultimate size (resolution) of your images is essentially in your hands—you decide their dimensions and how much optimization has to be added to each file to produce the fastest download speeds at the best image quality.

Facebook

According to Facebook guidelines, *high-resolution* images can be as large as 2,048 pixels (wide). This particular dimension will produce the best visual result—even if Facebook's **automatic compression algorithms**, which are added to every upload, are heavier (more damaging) than most people might be comfortable with. Unfortunately, there's nothing you can do about the compression level. If the images don't appear as good as you hoped, try re-editing them and upload them again—this only takes a few minutes. Facebook is the world's largest repository of images, so, with something like 300 million images uploaded **every day**, I'm surprised that its compression algorithms aren't even more aggressive.

One typical method of reducing the resolution of an image that is destined for posting on a personal website or social media would be to use the **Image Size** tool (**Image | Resize | Image Size**). This is fine for one or two images but tedious if you are uploading more than a handful. You can, of course, upload a full resolution image directly to Facebook but, again, if there are a few to upload, this is going to use up a lot of bandwidth and take a lot of time. If you want the fastest uploads, resize everything to fit the exact display proportions first. I usually size images a bit larger than the recommended size (for example, 2,500 pixels wide).

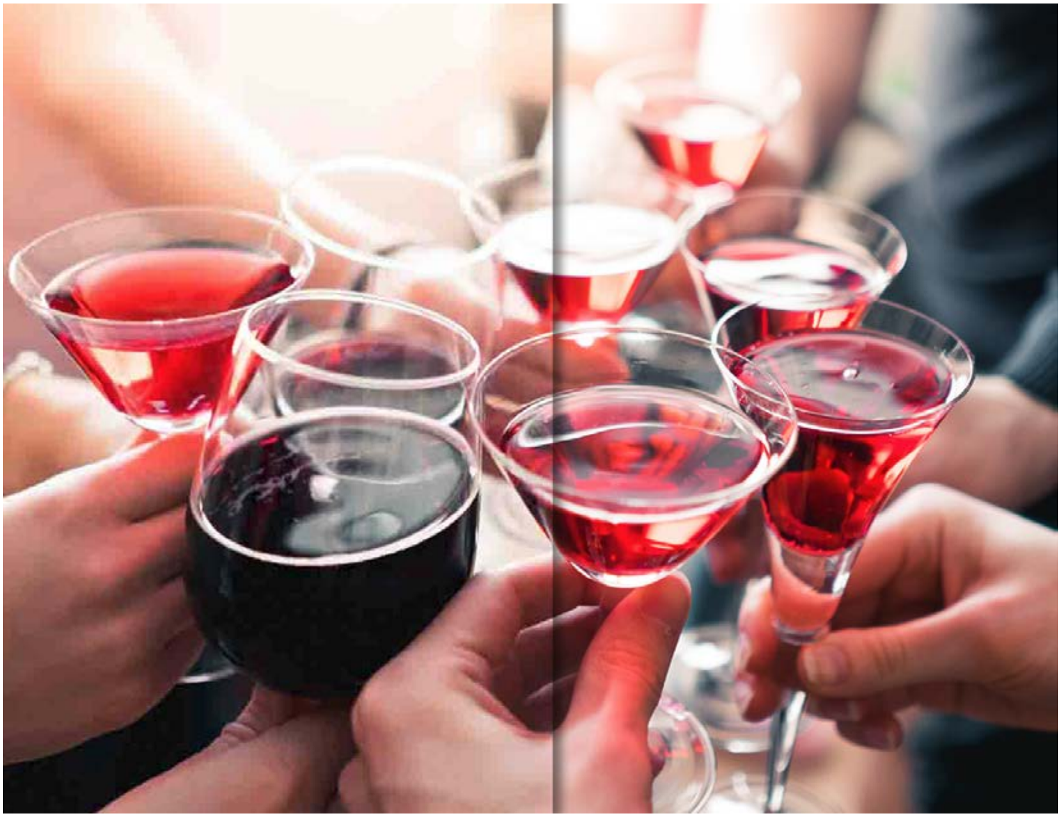


Pixel Dimensions: 8.00M
Width: 2048 Pixels
Height: 1365 Pixels

Document Size:
Width: 28.444 Inches
Height: 18.961 Inches
Resolution: 72 Pixels/Inch

☑ Scale Styles
☑ Constrain Proportions
☑ Resample Image
Bicubic (best for smooth gradients)

As a reminder, this is what happens if the JPEG compression added to a file is too much—it produces softness, lack of color, and low sharpness, as in the following figure, compared to the original in the preceding screenshot:



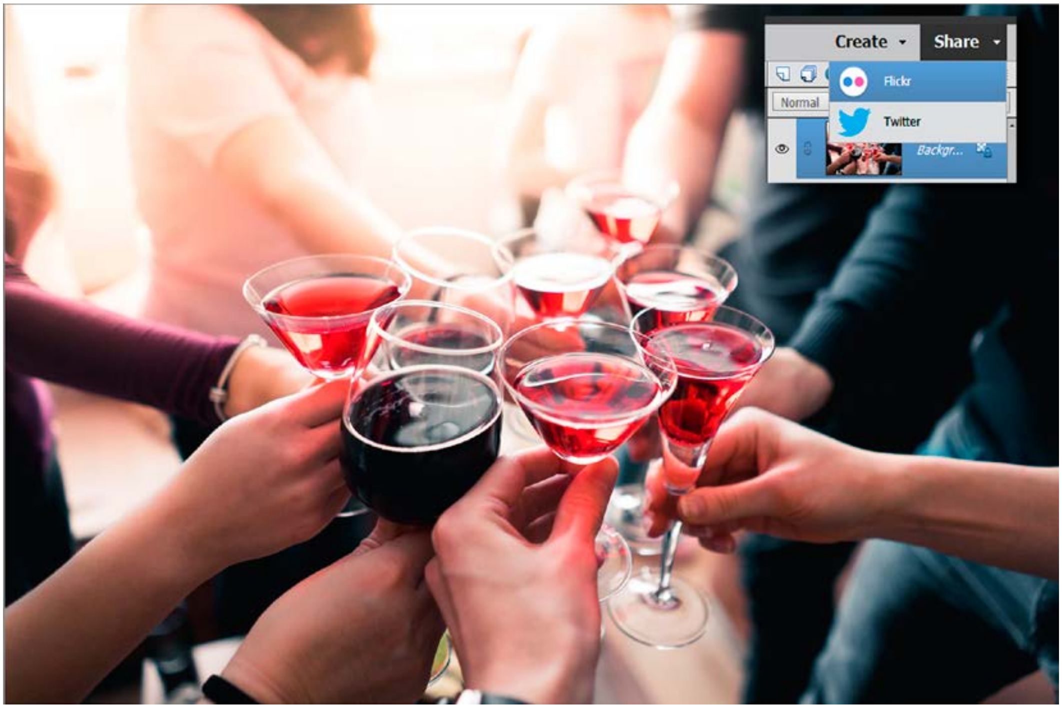
Instagram

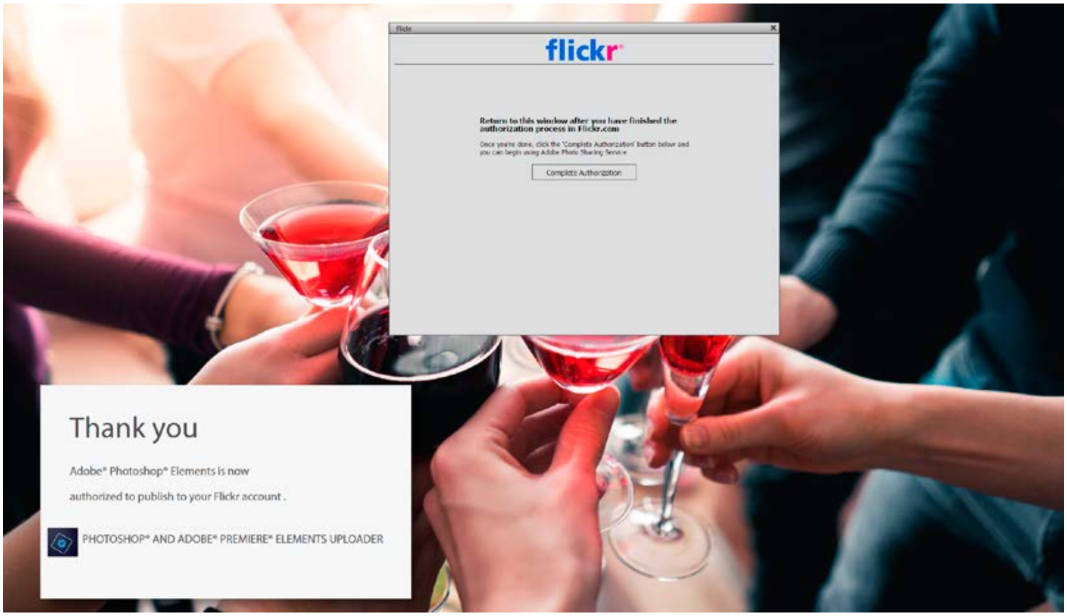
As another ever-growing repository of image and video data, **Instagram** recently increased its standard image resolution requirement to 1,080 pixels per square inch. It's not much, considering the original resolution of most cameras is 24 million pixels or more, but this has been an attempt to keep up with the ever-higher screen resolutions coming onto the market. When I first started writing about imaging technology, a 17-inch screen was a big deal. Now, if it's not 22, 24, or even 30 inches wide, it's considered old technology. 4K and 5K screens are pretty much standard, with higher-resolution **8K screens** just around the corner.

Flickr

As one of the world's largest image resources, **Flickr** is ever-changing in terms of its online resolution requirements. Currently, you may still upload high-resolution files to this site, but you can elect to set the online display resolution of those files to a maximum of 2,048 x 1,463 pixels or smaller, should you wish. Again, the real danger of uploading full-resolution files while having them in the public domain is that it might attract unsavory characters wanting to download and use your work for free (see the *Copyright symbol* section in this chapter). Some folk are happy to do this, but if you are hoping to make a commercial business from your photography, only upload low-resolution, copyright-stamped versions, and store the best, high-resolution work on external drives or use a cloud-based service such as **Dropbox**.

To get your images out of Elements and uploaded to a **Flickr account**, it might be best to have the image open (and preferably edited) on the desktop. Then, find the **Flickr** tab from the **Share** drop-down menu in **Editor** (note that you can also upload directly to Flickr from **Organizer**):





Return to this window after you have finished the authorization process in Flickr.com

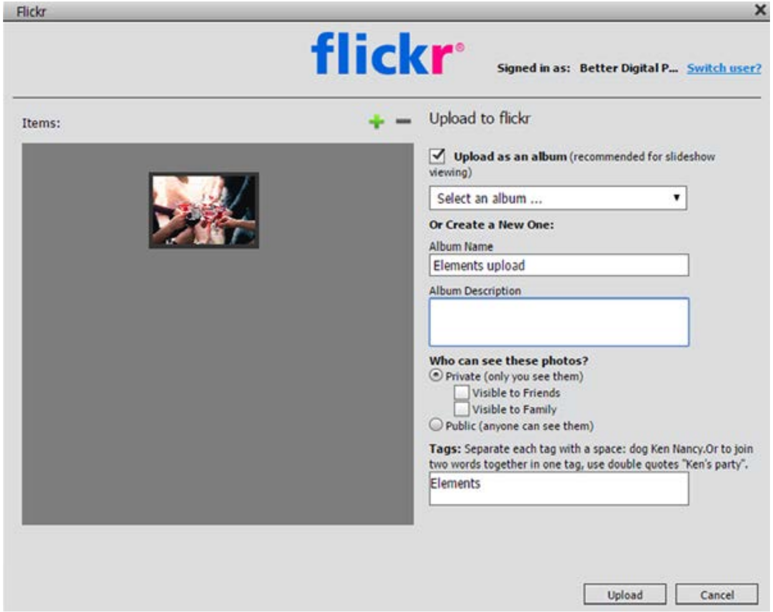
Once you're done, click the 'Complete Authorization' button below and you can begin using Adobe Photo Sharing Service

Thank you

Adobe® Photoshop® Elements is now authorized to publish to your Flickr account .

PHOTOSHOP® AND ADOBE® PREMIERE® ELEMENTS UPLOADER

If you have never done this before, you'll have to first authorize the transaction between Flickr and Elements. Just agree to all of the conditions and you'll get a thank-you from Adobe once it's completed. The process takes a few seconds. Click **Complete Authorization** in the Flickr panel (highlighted here), and you are good to start uploading images directly into your Flickr Photostream.



Signed in as: Better Digital P...

☑ **Upload as an album** (recommended for slideshow viewing)

Select an album ...

Or Create a New One:

Album Name: Elements upload

Album Description:

Who can see these photos?

● Private (only you see them)

☐ Visible to Friends

☐ Visible to Family

○ Public (anyone can see them)

Tags: Separate each tag with a space: dog Ken Nancy.Or to join two words together in one tag, use double quotes "Ken's party".

Elements

Left: The upload process is easy from here on. Select one or more images, then select an album to display them on Flickr, or create a new one for everything to go into. Then, add a description, if needed, elect who can or cannot see the images, add Tags if needed, and hit **Upload**.

Print resolution

All print work (such as photo inkjet, laser, newspapers, magazines, photo books, flyers, posters, and other four-color lithographic print jobs) has to be set to a resolution of 300dpi as a best practice, so the files that are used are going to be far larger than those for web display. 300 dpi is called the *standard print resolution* because it produces a seamless, continuous tone image, with no visible pixelation or color banding.

That being said, thanks to some fantastic **resampling software**, inkjet printers and most commercial four-color CMYK print devices can produce beautiful results using files with a lower-than-recommended resolution. Before committing to any commercial print job, always check these details with your local business before you start outputting for print.

BALI:
ISLAND OF THE GODS
Maroc
Colour
CUBA
Celebrating the marriage of
Francis and Estella

All terrestrial-based book-making software only functions with JPEG or PNG files. If they are RAW, TIFF, or PSD files, they must be converted first, using the **Export as New Files** feature, to a folder. Then they can be imported into the book software.

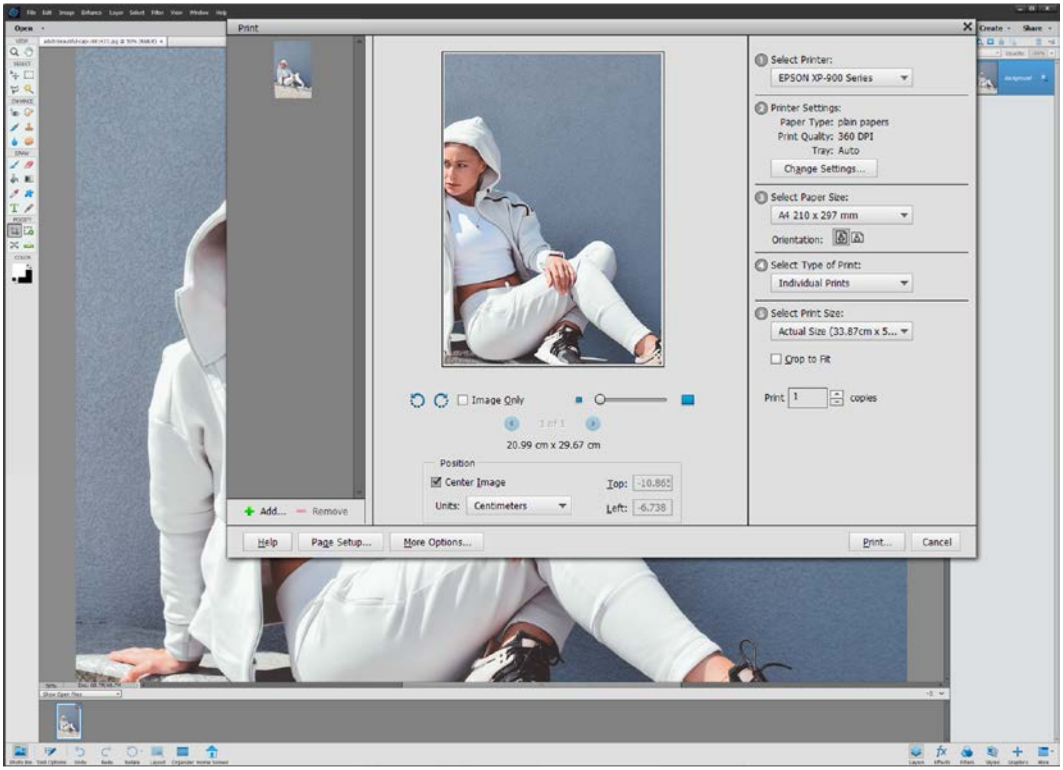
BALI:
ND OF THE GODS
Bimoli

At left: Here's an example of how PNG files can be used to **preserve transparency**—in this case, images with ripped edge and non-rectilinear three-dimensional lift-off-the-page effects.

Local printing

Elements is well equipped for print output if you have access to a laser printer or an inkjet device (note that photo-quality inkjet printers will always produce better photographic quality than laser printers). If you have spent time resizing your images to fit your favorite paper sizes, then it's an easy process to choose **Print | File | Print** and send the data to the printer. As a bonus, Elements allows you to queue multiple files for printing. If you forgot to load an image into this queue, it's easy enough to add (and subtract) images at a later date.

To get an idea of both its capabilities as well as its complexity, the following screenshots illustrate the various steps needed for a regular home print, plus all of the many options it includes. Let's go over these now:



① Select Printer: EPSON XP-900 Series

② Printer Settings:
Paper Type: plain papers
Print Quality: 360 DPI
Tray: Auto

③ Select Paper Size: A4 210 x 297 mm

④ Select Type of Print: Individual Prints

⑤ Select Print Size: Actual Size (33.87cm x 5...

☐ Crop to Fit

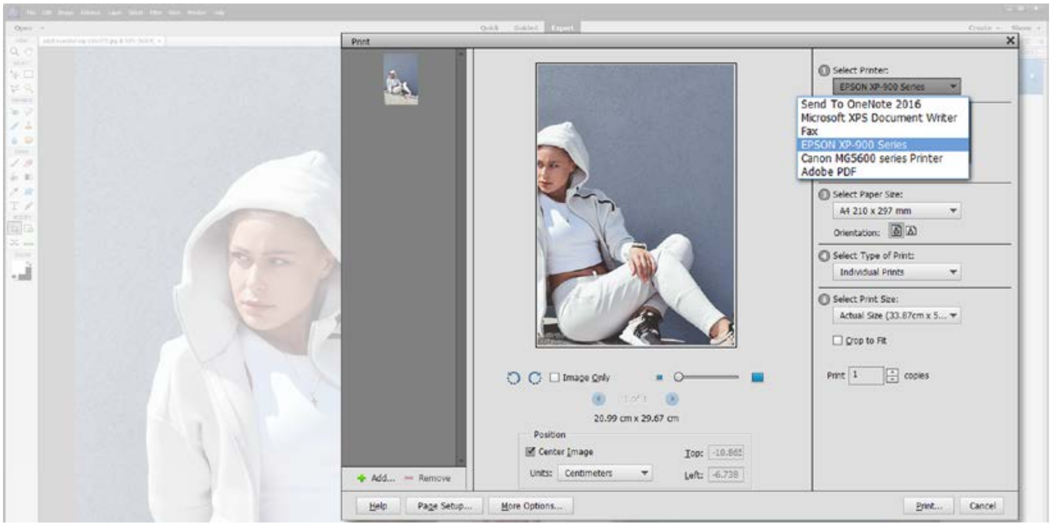
Print 1 copies

☐ Image Only

20.99 cm x 29.67 cm

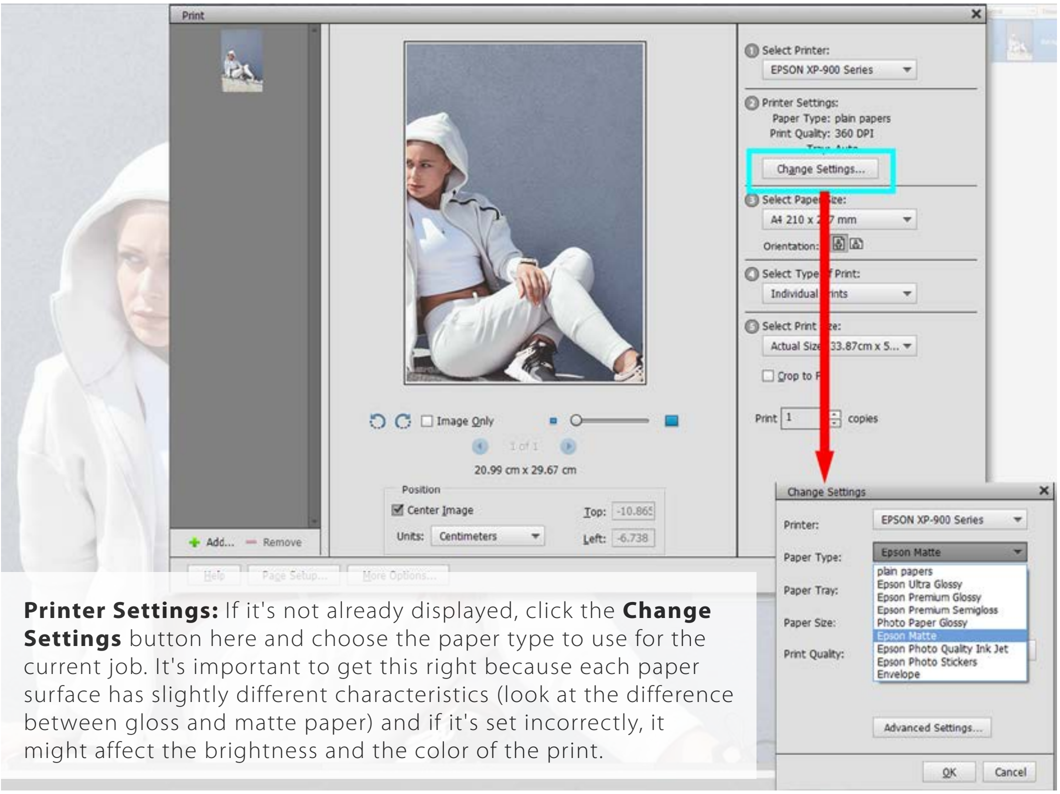
Position
☑ Center Image
Units: Centimeters
Top: -10.865
Left: -6.738

Above: This is the Elements **Print** panel for Windows. I think it is overly complex, confusing, and poorly designed. There are too many windows, buttons, options, and hidden settings—this is very confusing when all you want to do is print a photo!



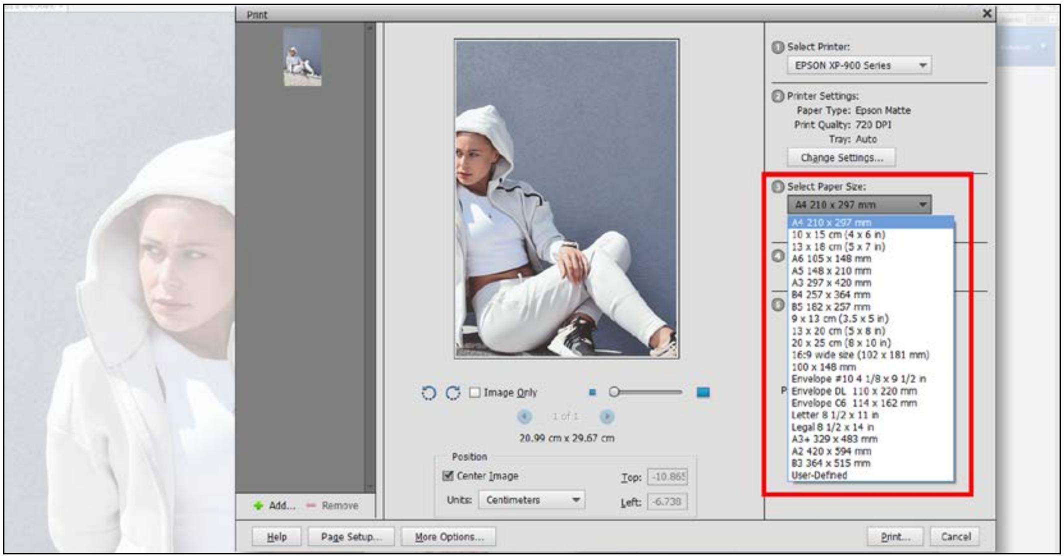
Print
Select Printer:
EPSON XP-900 Series
Send To OneNote 2016
Microsoft XPS Document Writer
Fax
EPSON XP-900 Series
Canon MG5600 series Printer
Adobe PDF
Select Paper Size:
A4 210 x 297 mm
Orientation:
Select Type of Print:
Individual Prints
Select Print Size:
Actual Size (33.87cm x 5...
☐ Crop to Fit
Print 1 copies
☐ Image Only
1 of 1
20.99 cm x 29.67 cm
Position
☑ Center Image
Top: -10.865
Units: Centimeters
Left: -6.738
Add... Remove
Help
Page Setup...
More Options...
Print...
Cancel

Select Printer: If you only have one device connected, that's the default; otherwise, hit the drop-down menu and select the appropriate print device (note that if you have recently replaced a printer, the software driver for the old one will still show up in this list unless you take the time to delete it).



Print
① Select Printer:
EPSON XP-900 Series
② Printer Settings:
Paper Type: plain papers
Print Quality: 360 DPI
Change Settings...
Select Paper Size:
A4 210 x 297 mm
Orientation:
Select Type of Print:
Individual Prints
Select Print Size:
Actual Size 33.87cm x 5...
☐ Crop to Fit
Print 1 copies
☐ Image Only
1 of 1
20.99 cm x 29.67 cm
Position
☑ Center Image
Top: -10.865
Units: Centimeters
Left: -6.738
Add... Remove
Help
Page Setup...
More Options...
Change Settings
Printer: EPSON XP-900 Series
Paper Type: Epson Matte
plain papers
Epson Ultra Glossy
Epson Premium Glossy
Epson Premium Semigloss
Photo Paper Glossy
Epson Matte
Epson Photo Quality Ink Jet
Epson Photo Stickers
Envelope
Paper Tray:
Paper Size:
Print Quality:
Advanced Settings...
OK
Cancel

Printer Settings: If it's not already displayed, click the **Change Settings** button here and choose the paper type to use for the current job. It's important to get this right because each paper surface has slightly different characteristics (look at the difference between gloss and matte paper) and if it's set incorrectly, it might affect the brightness and the color of the print.



Select Printer: EPSON XP-900 Series

Printer Settings:
Paper Type: Epson Matte
Print Quality: 720 DPI
Tray: Auto

Select Paper Size: A4 210 x 297 mm

☑ Center Image

Units: Centimeters

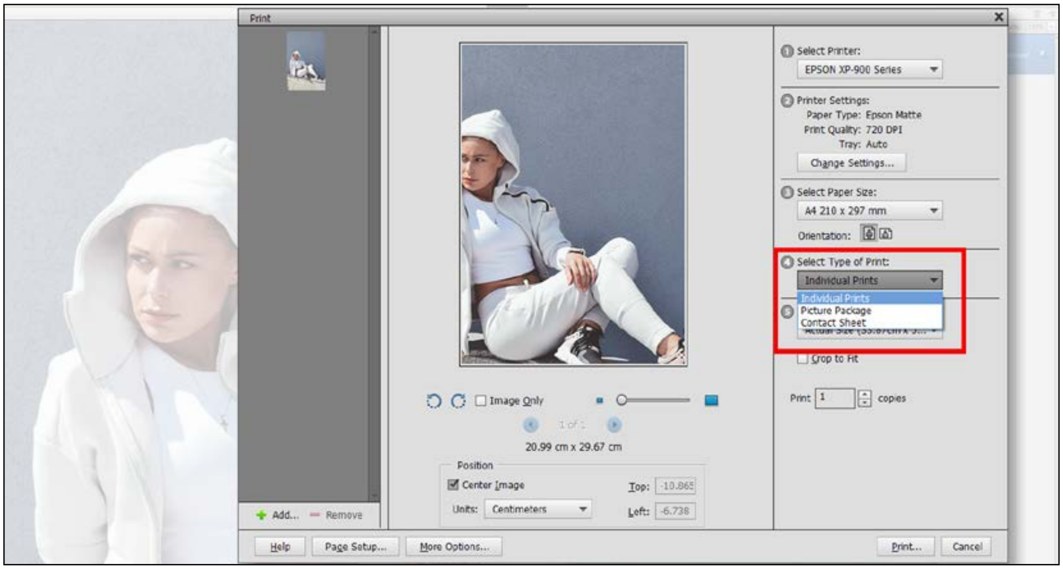
Top: -10.865

Left: -6.738

20.99 cm x 29.67 cm

Print
A4 210 x 297 mm
10 x 15 cm (4 x 6 in)
13 x 18 cm (5 x 7 in)
A6 105 x 148 mm
A5 148 x 210 mm
A3 297 x 420 mm
B4 257 x 364 mm
B5 182 x 257 mm
9 x 13 cm (3.5 x 5 in)
13 x 20 cm (5 x 8 in)
20 x 25 cm (8 x 10 in)
16:9 wide size (102 x 181 mm)
100 x 148 mm
Envelope #10 4 1/8 x 9 1/2 in
Envelope DL 110 x 220 mm
Envelope C6 114 x 162 mm
Letter 8 1/2 x 11 in
Legal 8 1/2 x 14 in
A3+ 329 x 483 mm
A2 420 x 594 mm
B3 364 x 515 mm
User-Defined
Change Settings...
☐ Image Only
1 of 1
Position
Add...
Remove
Help
Page Setup...
More Options...
Print...
Cancel

Select Paper Size: This is a no-brainer, but I'm always mildly surprised at how easy it is to just press the print button in a hurry, only to find it was set to 5 x 7 inches and not **A4**, so I have to start over. Also, check the paper orientation (**Landscape** or **Portrait**) in order to match the image being printed.



Select Printer: EPSON XP-900 Series

Printer Settings:
Paper Type: Epson Matte
Print Quality: 720 DPI
Tray: Auto

Select Paper Size: A4 210 x 297 mm

Select Type of Print: Individual Prints

☐ Crop to Fit

Print 1 copies

☑ Center Image

Units: Centimeters

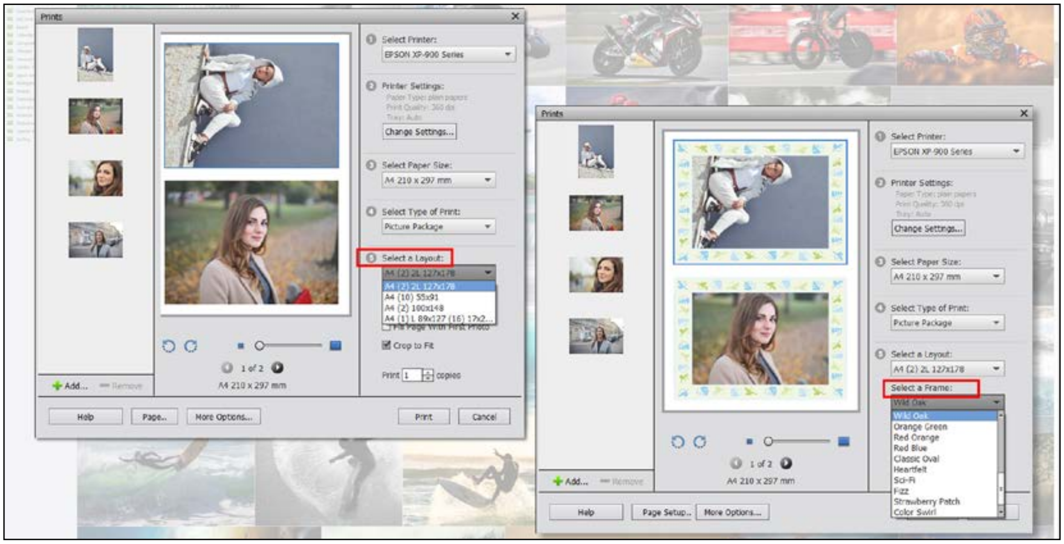
Top: -10.865

Left: -6.738

20.99 cm x 29.67 cm

Print
Orientation:
Individual Prints
Picture Package
Contact Sheet
Change Settings...
☐ Image Only
1 of 1
Position
Add...
Remove
Help
Page Setup...
More Options...
Print...
Cancel

Select Type of Print: Most photographers will expect to fill the page with one image (choose **Individual Prints**) but Elements offers two other options, as you can see in the following screenshot.



Prints

Select Printer: EPSON XP-900 Series

Printer Settings:
Paper Type: plain papers
Print Quality: 360 dpi
Tray: Auto

Select Paper Size: A4 210 x 297 mm

Select Type of Print: Picture Package

Select a Layout: A4 (2) 2L 127x178

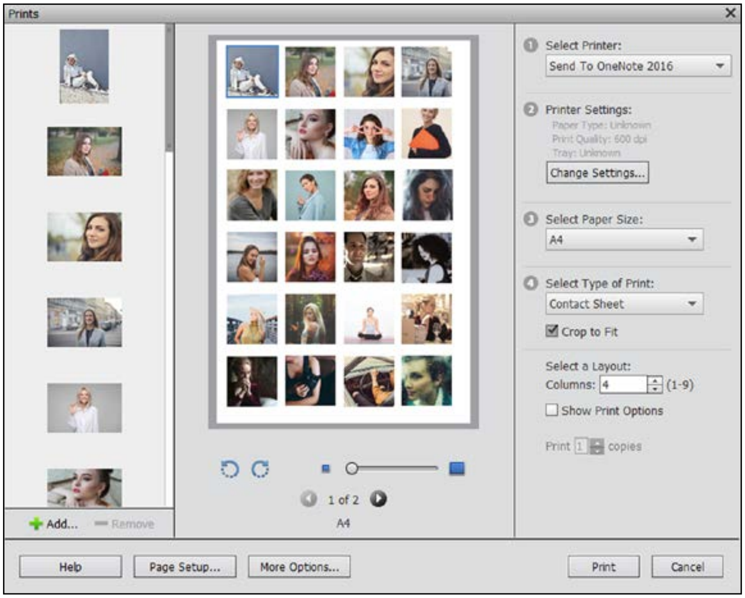
Select a Frame: Wild Oak

☑ Crop to Fit

Print 1 copies

Change Settings...
A4 (2) 2L 127x178
A4 (10) 55x91
A4 (2) 100x148
A4 (1) L 89x127 (16) 17x2...
Fill Page With First Photo
Wild Oak
Orange Green
Red Orange
Red Blue
Classic Oval
Heartfelt
Sci-Fi
Fizz
Strawberry Patch
Color Swirl
1 of 2
A4 210 x 297 mm
Add...
Remove
Help
Page...
Page Setup...
More Options...
Print
Cancel

Picture Package: This function arranges multiple photos onto a single page according to the layout chosen from **Select a Layout**. There are only four layouts for A4 paper—two-up (127 x 178mm), ten-up (55 x 91mm), two-up (100 x 148mm), and 16 assorted sizes (a true package). Other paper sizes have a different number of options available.



Prints

Select Printer: Send To OneNote 2016

Printer Settings:
Paper Type: Unknown
Print Quality: 600 dpi
Tray: Unknown

Select Paper Size: A4

Select Type of Print: Contact Sheet

☑ Crop to Fit

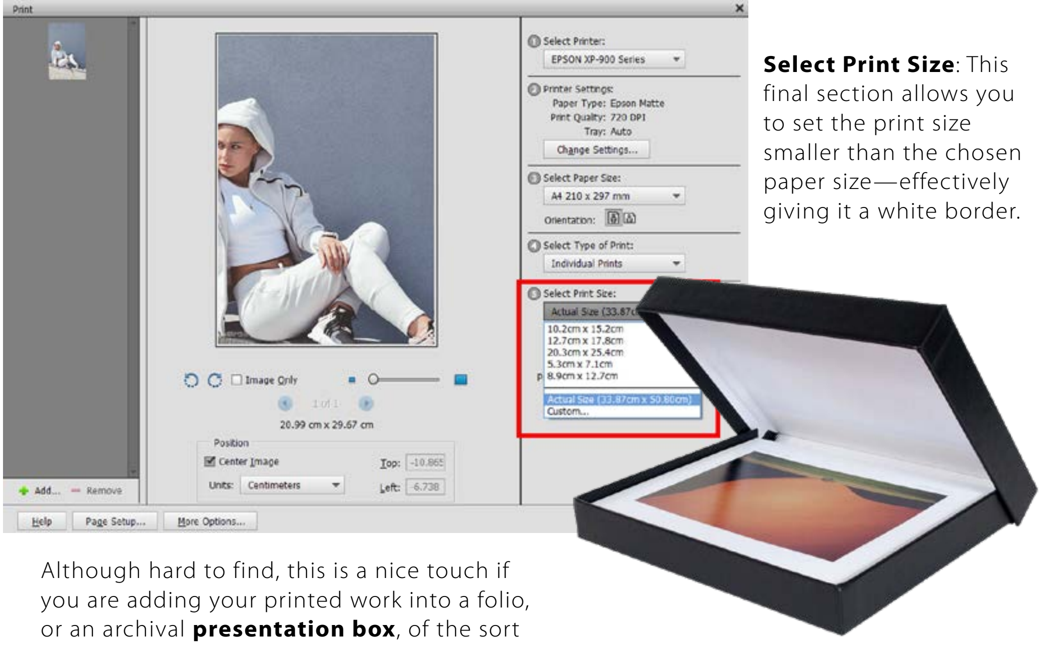
Select a Layout:
Columns: 4 (1-9)

☐ Show Print Options

Print 1 copies

Change Settings...
1 of 2
A4
Add...
Remove
Help
Page Setup...
More Options...
Print
Cancel

Contact Prints: One of my favorite features because it mimics the traditional photo darkroom contact print format. It adds as many images as you want to each page (actually, you can only add nine columns, which makes the images about the size of a postage stamp). You can also include the date, caption, and filename of each image in the sheet, if required. In all of these printing modes (**Individual**, **Package**, and **Contact Sheets**), if you add more images than can fit on one page, Photoshop Elements adds another page so that everything fits—a very nice touch.



Print
Add...
Remove
Image Only
1 of 1
Help
Page Setup...
More Options...

20.99 cm x 29.67 cm

Position
☑ Center Image
Units: Centimeters
Top: -10.865
Left: -6.738

1 Select Printer: EPSON XP-900 Series

2 Printer Settings:
Paper Type: Epson Matte
Print Quality: 720 DPI
Tray: Auto
Change Settings...

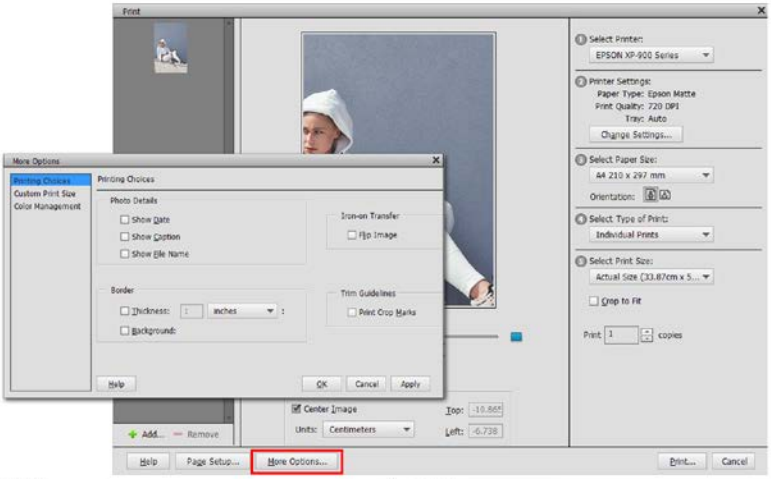
3 Select Paper Size: A4 210 x 297 mm
Orientation:

4 Select Type of Print: Individual Prints

5 Select Print Size: Actual Size (33.87c
10.2cm x 15.2cm
12.7cm x 17.8cm
20.3cm x 25.4cm
5.3cm x 7.1cm
8.9cm x 12.7cm
Actual Size (33.87cm x 50.80cm)
Custom...

Select Print Size: This final section allows you to set the print size smaller than the chosen paper size—effectively giving it a white border.

Although hard to find, this is a nice touch if you are adding your printed work into a folio, or an archival **presentation box**, of the sort pictured here.



Print
More Options
Printing Choices
Custom Print Size
Color Management
Help
OK
Cancel
Apply
Add...
Remove
Help
Page Setup...
More Options...
Print...
Cancel

Printing Choices
Photo Details
☐ Show Date
☐ Show Caption
☐ Show File Name
Iron-on Transfer
☐ Flip Image
Border
☐ Thickness: 1 inches
☐ Background:
Trim Guidelines
☐ Print Crop Marks

☑ Center Image
Units: Centimeters
Top: -10.865
Left: -6.738

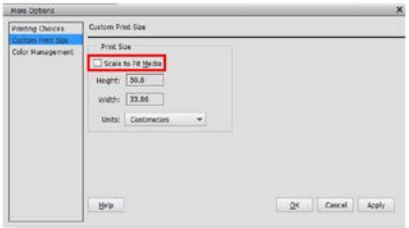
1 Select Printer: EPSON XP-900 Series

2 Printer Settings:
Paper Type: Epson Matte
Print Quality: 720 DPI
Tray: Auto
Change Settings...

3 Select Paper Size: A4 210 x 297 mm
Orientation:

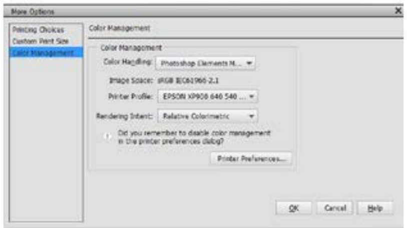
4 Select Type of Print: Individual Prints

5 Select Print Size: Actual Size (33.87cm x 5...
☐ Crop to Fit
Print 1 copies



More Options
Printing Choices
Custom Print Size
Color Management
Help
OK
Cancel
Apply

Custom Print Size
Print Size
☐ Scale to Fit Media
Height: 50.8
Width: 33.86
Units: Centimeters



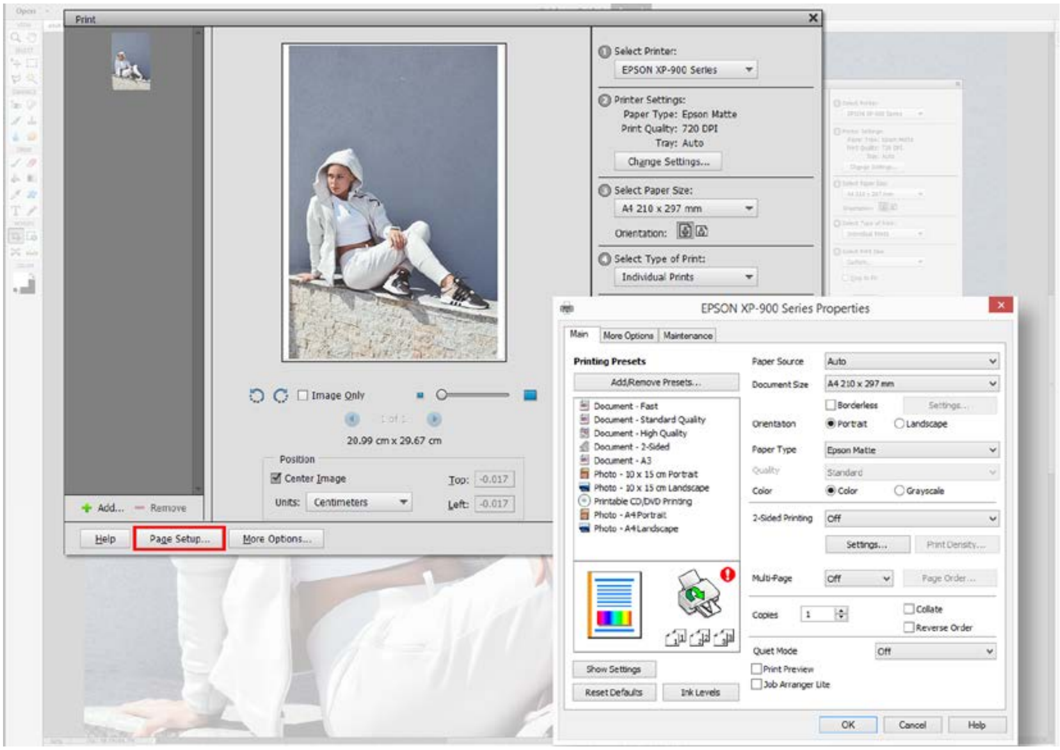
More Options
Printing Choices
Custom Print Size
Color Management
Printer Preferences...
OK
Cancel
Help

Color Management
Color Handling: Photoshop Elements M...
Image Space: sRGB IEC61966-2.1
Printer Profile: EPSON XP900 640 540 ...
Rendering Intent: Relative Colorimetric
Did you remember to disable color management in the printer preferences dialog?

More Options: This button reveals **three more panels** for adding photo details and a border, checking **Scale to Fit Media** (custom sizes), and using **Color Management** (set this so that Photoshop Elements manages colors). It's where you'll find the **Scale to Fit Media** checkbox. Now, you are finally ready to click the **Print** button!

Page Setup

This button takes you to the printer software where you can also set the paper size, paper type, and other printer-specific features, such as two-sided printing, borderless printing, checking ink levels, and turning the printer's color management software to **Off** (it's always better to let Photoshop Elements handle the color management):



Print

Select Printer: EPSON XP-900 Series

Printer Settings:
Paper Type: Epson Matte
Print Quality: 720 DPI
Tray: Auto

Select Paper Size: A4 210 x 297 mm

Select Type of Print: Individual Prints

20.99 cm x 29.67 cm

Position
☑ Center Image
Units: Centimeters
Top: -0.017
Left: -0.017

EPSON XP-900 Series Properties

Paper Source: Auto
Document Size: A4 210 x 297 mm
☐ Borderless
Orientation: ● Portrait ○ Landscape
Paper Type: Epson Matte
Quality: Standard
Color: ● Color ○ Grayscale
2-Sided Printing: Off
Multi-Page: Off
Copies: 1
☐ Collate
☐ Reverse Order
Quiet Mode: Off
☐ Print Preview
☐ Job Arranger Lite

☐ Image Only
1 of 1
Add...
Remove
Help
Page Setup...
More Options...
Orientation:
Change Settings...
Main
More Options
Maintenance
Printing Presets
Add/Remove Presets...
Document - Fast
Document - Standard Quality
Document - High Quality
Document - 2-Sided
Document - A3
Photo - 10 x 15 cm Portrait
Photo - 10 x 15 cm Landscape
Printable CD/DVD Printing
Photo - A4 Portrait
Photo - A4 Landscape
Settings...
Print Density...
Page Order...
Show Settings
Reset Defaults
Ink Levels
OK
Cancel
Help

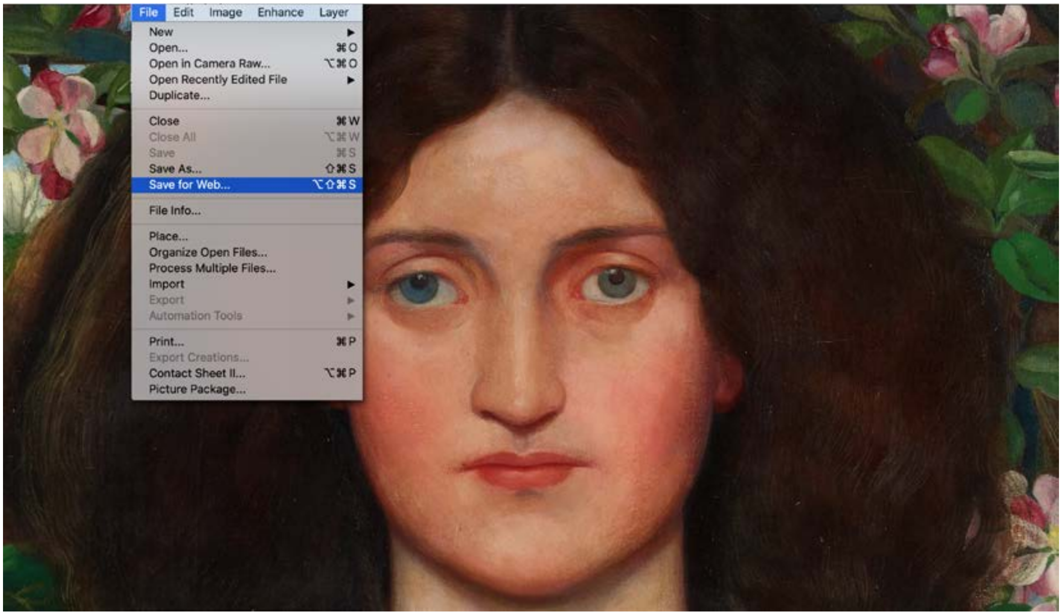
This is the printer's software—offering a range of more options, as if we don't have enough already. Options include printer maintenance (important), paper source, orientation, paper type, and more. You'll find that the user settings are a great feature that allows you to save all your settings so they can be recalled next time you make a print. You can then save user settings for glossy paper, matte papers—even different ink types and final print sizes.

Archival printing: When inkjet printers first hit the consumer market in the late 80s we all jumped for joy because, almost overnight, we had taken control of a major part of the photographic process. However, aside from poor resolution, early units produced prints that faded in months. Today it's possible to buy inkjet printers that, in combination with archival inks and acid-free papers, produce full-color, high-resolution results guaranteed not to fade for 100+ years. A remarkable achievement in a very short period of time. The best archival inkjet printers come from Epson and Canon, although there are dozens of companies producing excellent archival media.

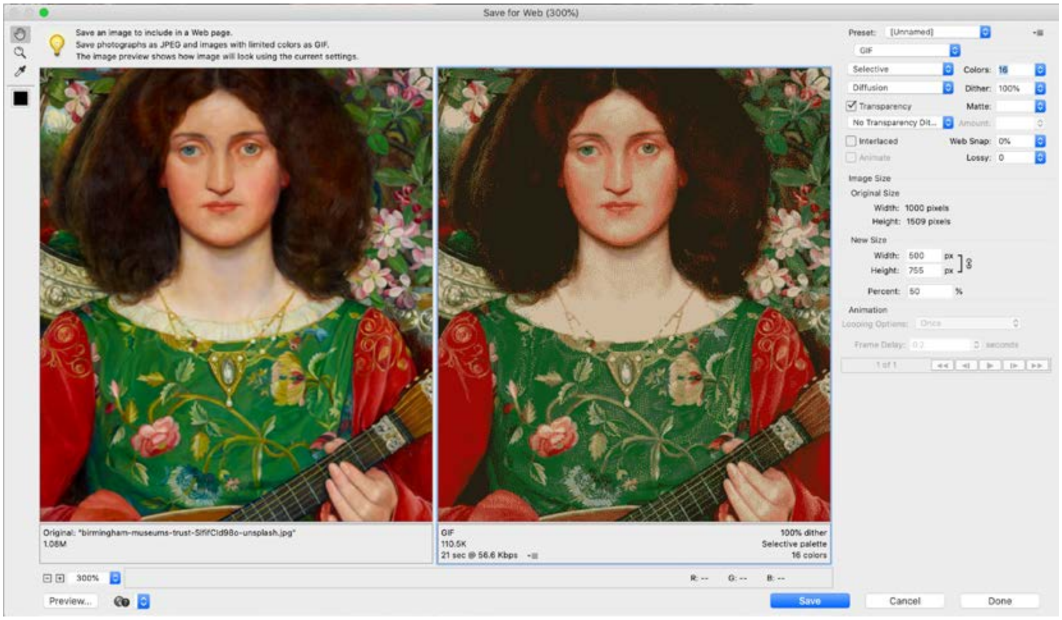
Save for Web

Photoshop Elements comes with a feature called **Save for Web** (**File | Save for Web**), a slightly simplified legacy feature that was passed down from Adobe Photoshop. You would use this feature to specifically fine-tune image output so that it performs optimally on web-based media, such as blogs and websites. Note that although this is an excellent process for perfecting web-bound images, uploading to some social media sites might produce a slightly different quality because those sites (such as Facebook and Instagram) might apply additional manipulation, particularly with regard to **file compression**, but also in relation to maximum permissible file sizes.

Before you start using this feature, it's probably best to reduce your files to a reasonably manageable size before fine-tuning with **Save for Web**. For most web applications, if the file's longest edge is 1,000 or 1,200 pixels, this is a perfectly sufficient resolution. It's not too big but, then again, it's not too small either:


File Edit Image Enhance Layer
New ▶
Open... ⌘O
Open in Camera Raw... ⌥⌘O
Open Recently Edited File ▶
Duplicate...
Close ⌘W
Close All ⌥⌘W
Save ⌘S
Save As... ⇧⌘S
Save for Web... ⌥⇧⌘S
File Info...
Place...
Organize Open Files...
Process Multiple Files...
Import ▶
Export ▶
Automation Tools ▶
Print... ⌘P
Export Creations...
Contact Sheet II... ⌥⌘P
Picture Package...

To use **Save for Web**, the image must be opened in the **Expert** edit mode. First off, though, as a suggestion, it's a good idea to reduce the image size (using the **Image Size** panel). In this example taken from a museum archive, the scanned original was huge (100+ Mb), which in turn would slow the preview capability of **Save for Web** dramatically. Once reduced to a more handlable dimension, use the **File**>**Save for Web** command.



Save an image to include in a Web page.
Save photographs as JPEG and images with limited colors as GIF.
The image preview shows how image will look using the current settings.

Preset: [Unnamed]
GIF
Selective
Colors: 16
Diffusion
Dither: 100%
☑ Transparency
Matte:
No Transparency Dit...
Amount:
☐ Interlaced
Web Snap: 0%
☐ Animate
Lossy: 0

Image Size
Original Size
Width: 1000 pixels
Height: 1509 pixels
New Size
Width: 500 px
Height: 755 px
Percent: 50 %
Animation
Looping Options: Once
Frame Delay: 0.2 seconds
1 of 1

Original: "birmingham-museums-trust-SIfifCId98o-unsplash.jpg"
1.08M

GIF
110.5K
21 sec @ 56.6 Kbps
100% dither
Selective palette
16 colors

300%
R: -- G: -- B: --

Settings: Here's the twin-screen configuration with the untouched version on the left, and the processed reduced-color GIF file on the right. Display speeds are listed at the base of the image, while the file format, compression, dithering, and color size are adjusted through either the drop-down preset menu, on the top right-hand side of the screen, or by setting the edit parameters manually using the sliders and menu choices. You can also use this utility to reduce its file size, if you haven't already done so. I'd use this file reduction panel if I were only processing a couple of images; otherwise, I'd use the **Process Multiple Files** function to bulk-reduce image resolution first because it's so fast (you'll see how this works later in this chapter).

In the right-hand pane is a **GIF preview**, set to just **16 colors**. The image is looking spotty—but the display time is very fast. Everything in this technology is a compromise.

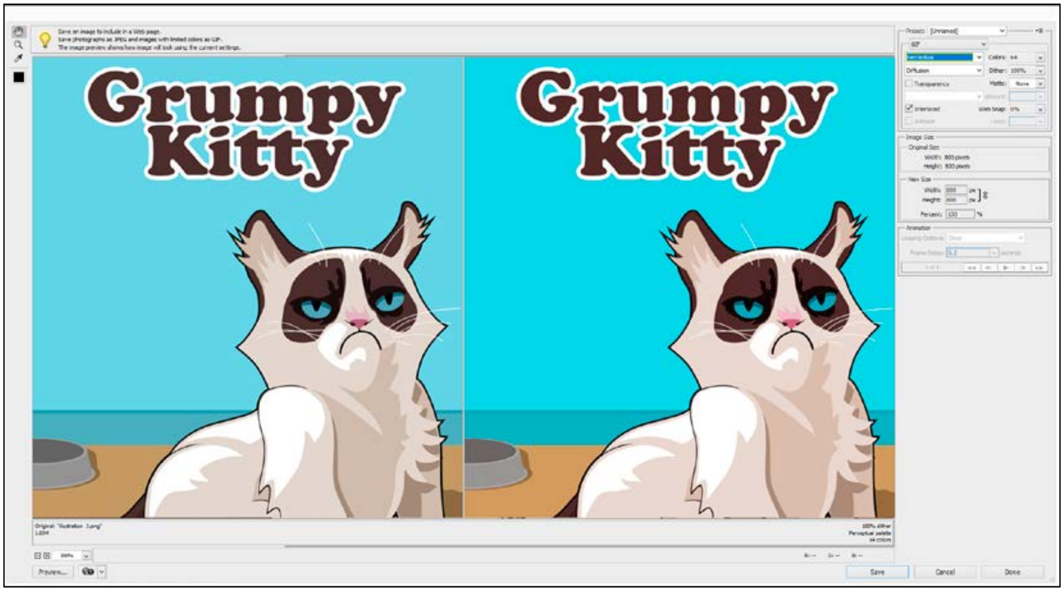
The **Save for Web** panel has a number of presets to get you started if the process of editing for the web is a new concept. Elements provides presets for saving GIF, PNG, and, of course, JPEG files, all of which can be set to different compressions and/or dither amounts (dithering is a clever computer technique where adjacent pixels are blended to create colors that might not be normally visible in the often-limited color range offered by GIF files—the more dithering, the larger the file size).

By choosing one of these presets, you'll see how much impact an additional compression, dither amount, optimization, or scan will have on the saving process. These options vary depending on which file format you are using. The time it will take to display using a range of internet speed samples can be adjusted from an excruciatingly slow 28 kilobytes per second to figures of around two megabits per second, depending on the resources available or the client's requirements.

The following is another good example of the varied quality output this feature can serve up. In this case, I have set the file format to **GIF** because the image is simple and contains few colors and no gradation. By choosing only **64** colors and adding a dither amount, the original (JPEG) file size is 1.5 MB, while the GIF version is only 48 KB. In practice, what dithering does is merge the pixels in such a way as to hide the blockiness some GIFs suffer from when their color palette has been pared down to the bare minimum. I suspect that many of these features are not as important now as they were five years ago before cable internet became an accepted default for many consumers. Of course, if you live in a country with poor internet speeds and access, you'll find these tools helpful. Note that in reality, you would never use the GIF file format for images.

The beauty of preparing images for use on the web is that, even if you've never done this before, it only takes a few minutes to upload the new material and, if it doesn't look good, it's quick enough to undo, fix, and replace.

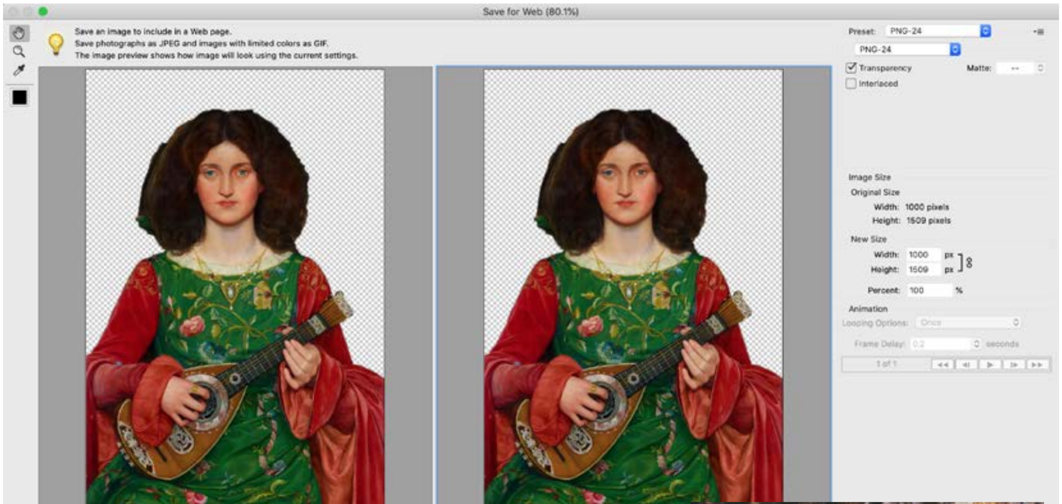
Save for Web also has this sensible feature called **Preview**, which shows you what the image looks like in an internet browser. For the best results, it's best to test your processed images on different browsers and computers:



Save an image to include in a Web page.
Save photographs as JPEG and images with limited colors as GIF.
The image preview shows how image will look using the current settings.

Preset: [Unnamed]
Diffusion
Colors: 64
Dither: 100%
☐ Transparency
Matte: None
☑ Interlaced
Web Snap: 0%
Original Size
Width: 800 pixels
Height: 800 pixels
Percent: 100 %

The idea behind working with this tool is to tinker with the settings that are available so that you get the fastest possible download speed without (too much) loss of image quality. It also gives you a great opportunity to swap between those (three different) file formats that produce, according to your settings, significantly different results. These can be accepted or rejected depending on the type of image, the placement in the web page, and the application of the web page (such as a personal portfolio, professional services, commercial shop front, or social media page).



Save an image to include in a Web page.
Save photographs as JPEG and images with limited colors as GIF.
The image preview shows how image will look using the current settings.

Preset: PNG-24

PNG-24

☑ Transparency Matte: --

☐ Interlaced

Image Size

Original Size

Width: 1000 pixels

Height: 1509 pixels

New Size

Width: 1000 px

Height: 1509 px

Percent: 100 %

Animation

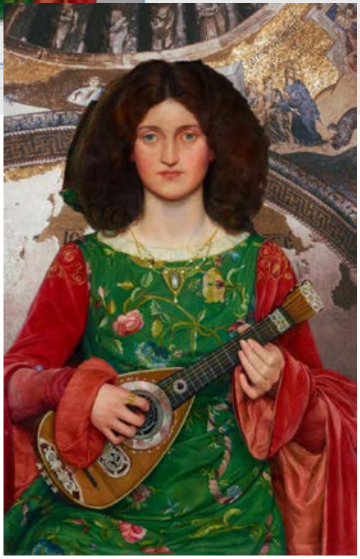
Looping Options: Once

Frame Delay: 0.2 seconds

Original: "birmingham-museums-trust-SIfifCId98o-unsplash.jpg"
5.76M

PNG-24
2.651M
492 sec @ 56.6 Kbps

80.1%



Here's the same file I have been using as an example, but in this version, the subject has been selected and the background removed—let's say because it needs to be placed into a different background. Saving this in the PNG file format nicely preserves those transparent areas (the chequerboard pattern). If this is saved as a JPEG, those transparent edges would be filled in with white (by default), so it has to be in PNG format to preserve transparency—when it is super-imposed on a background, it will fit seamlessly, as seen on the right (both Photoshop and TIFF files also save transparency but both would produce files that are far too big for internet use).

Web file formats:

JPEG is the best format for displaying photographs.

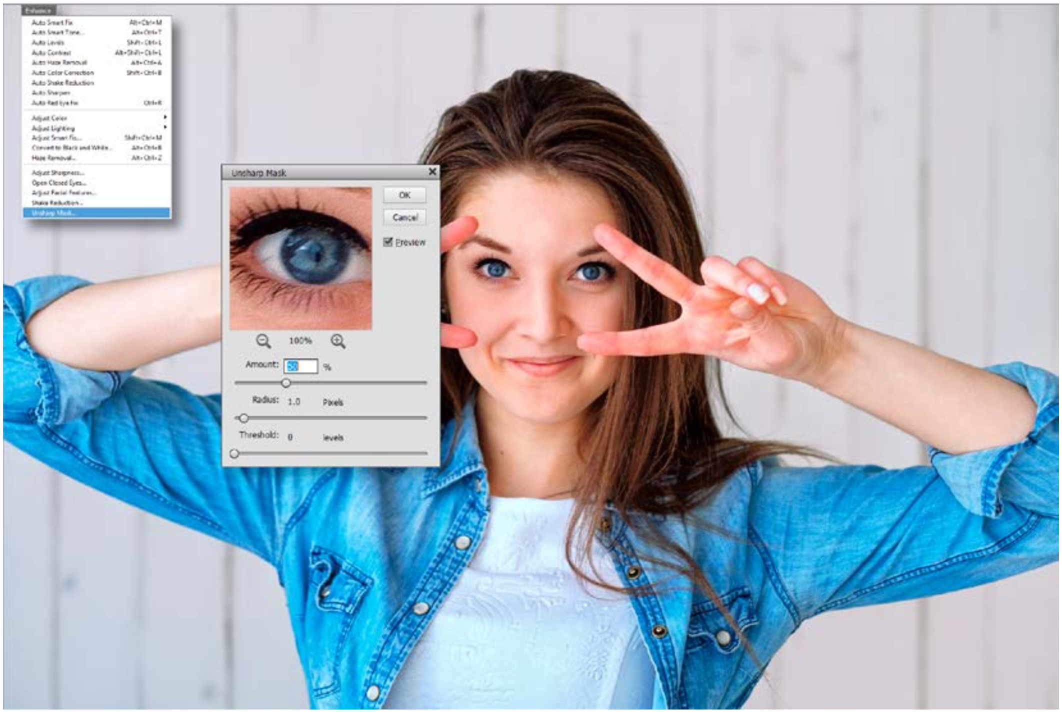
PNG24 is also a good format for photography. The PNG24 format comes into its own when you are saving transparency—for example, with a ripped, uneven edge effect, or a circular logo. PNG files save the image and the transparency around the image, so when it is placed on a color background, the transparency is replaced with the background color.

GIF is the format to use for displaying line art and illustrations that feature large areas of flat color and sharp detail and text. Animated images are also saved in GIF format.

PNG8 is an alternative to GIF in that you can set the number of colors it uses and therefore restrict file size accurately.

Unsharp Mask

We looked at the sharpening process in *Chapter 3*, *The Basics of Image Editing*, but I think it's worth going over some of the more important points again to ensure that your output quality is 100%.



Radius: 1.0 Pixels

Threshold: 0 levels

Enhance
Auto Smart Fix Alt+Ctrl+M
Auto Smart Tone... Alt+Ctrl+T
Auto Levels Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Contrast Alt+Shift+Ctrl+L
Auto Haze Removal Alt+Ctrl+A
Auto Color Correction Shift+Ctrl+B
Auto Shake Reduction
Auto Sharpen
Auto Red Eye Fix Ctrl+R
Adjust Color
Adjust Lighting
Adjust Smart Fix... Shift+Ctrl+M
Convert to Black and White... Alt+Ctrl+B
Haze Removal... Alt+Ctrl+Z
Adjust Sharpness...
Open Closed Eyes...
Adjust Facial Features...
Shake Reduction...
Unsharp Mask...
Unsharp Mask
OK
Cancel
☑ Preview
100%
Amount:
%

The regular **Unsharp Mask** filter from the **Enhance** menu has three sliders and a small preview window:

- The **Amount** slider is the amount of enhancement that's added to the edges of the contrast.
- The **Radius** slider controls how much attention is spread either side of the contrast edge.
- The **Threshold** slider has the effect of blending or softening the contrast edge.

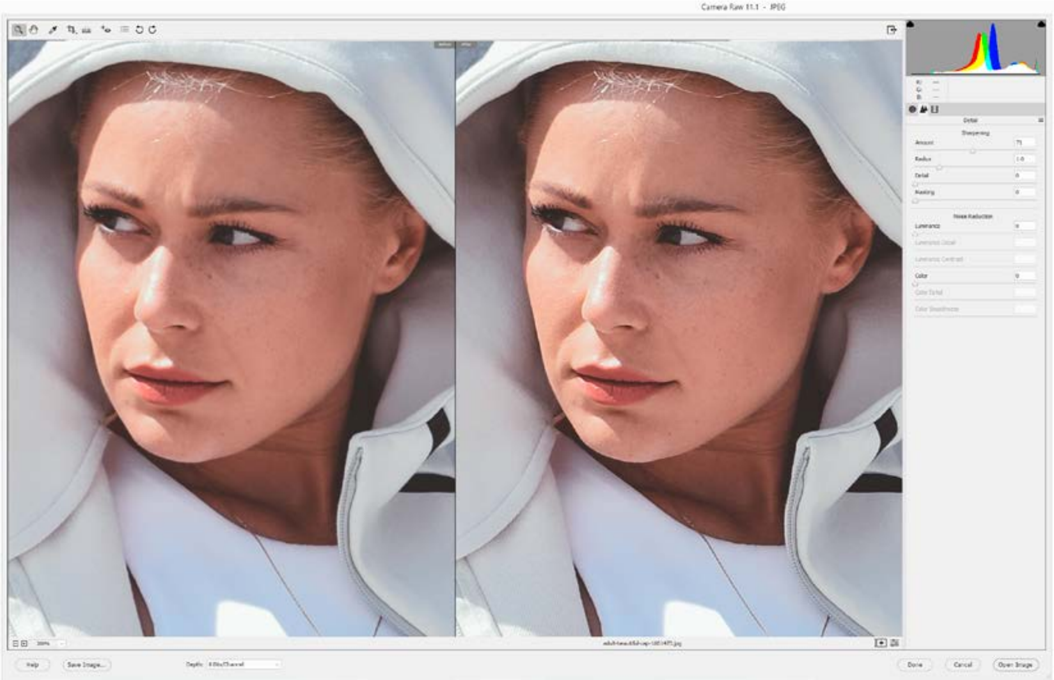
If the **Amount** and **Radius** sliders are increased too much, the sharpening effect looks very gritty and unpleasant to the eye. Adding a **Threshold** amount will help to soften the overall result.

Unfortunately, the downside of using this particular filter is that it's not possible to control the unsharp mask. We can do this in the **Camera RAW** window.

The **Unsharp Mask** filter, as shown in the previous screenshot, is accessed via the **Enhance** drop-down menu and is quick and easy to use, but it doesn't give you the same level of control you get with the **Detail** panel in **Camera RAW**.

If you open your picture in the **Camera RAW** editing window, Elements offers a far superior way of controlling the sharpening process. If you are editing a RAW file, this sharpening process is part of the normal procedure, but if you're working on a JPEG, TIFF, or PSD file, you must open it in the **Camera RAW** window using **File | Open in Camera RAW**.

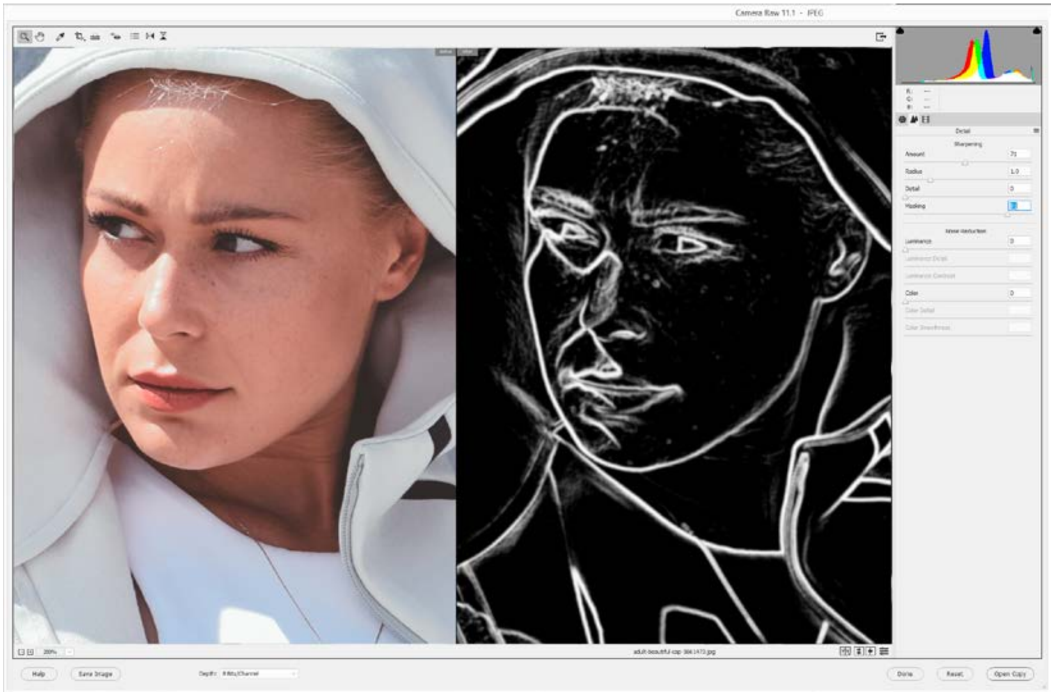
Once the image is open in **Camera RAW**, go to the **Detail** tab, and note that the sharpening panel has the same **Amount** and **Radius** sliders as the **Unsharp Mask** filter from the **Enhance** menu. Note that it also has **Detail** and **Masking** sliders. Here's how to get the best results from this feature.



Sharpening
Amount 71
Radius 1.0
Detail 0
Masking 0

Noise Reduction
Luminance 0
Luminance Detail
Luminance Contrast
Color 0
Color Detail
Color Smoothness

Unsharp Mask for non-RAW files: To open any file that's not a RAW file in the **Camera RAW** window, use **File>Open in Camera RAW**. This works for JPEG, TIFF, and PSD files. Set the **Amount** (of sharpening) and **Radius** sliders as you would have done using the regular unsharp mask filter. Of course, holding down the *Alt/Opt* key while using the **Masking** slider will reveal the extent of the sharpness mask—and of course you can also use **Camera RAW**'s excellent **Noise Reduction** filters on these non-RAW files as well.


Camera Raw 11.1 - JPEG
Detail
Sharpening
Amount
Radius
Detail
Masking
Noise Reduction
Luminance
Luminance Detail
Luminance Contrast
Color
Color Detail
Color Smoothness
Help
Save Image
Done
Reset
Open Copy

Viewing the mask: By holding the *Alt/Opt* key and then shifting the **Masking** slider at the same time, you'll see the black and white mask appear in the main screen. For a portrait, you probably want to move the slider to the right, to a point where the smooth skin areas are all black—this indicates that no sharpening will be applied to that area. As you can see in this screenshot, I have shifted the **Masking** slider to the right-hand side. This effectively restricts the spread of the sharpening effect to only the white regions (which means you should only sharpen the parts of the image that benefit most from it). In a portrait, there's little or no reason to sharpen open areas of skin because it can produce quite unflattering textured results. As soon as the *Alt/Opt* key is released, the mask is hidden, and you'll see the sharpening effect applied to the real image, especially if you enlarge that image beyond 100%, in the original version.

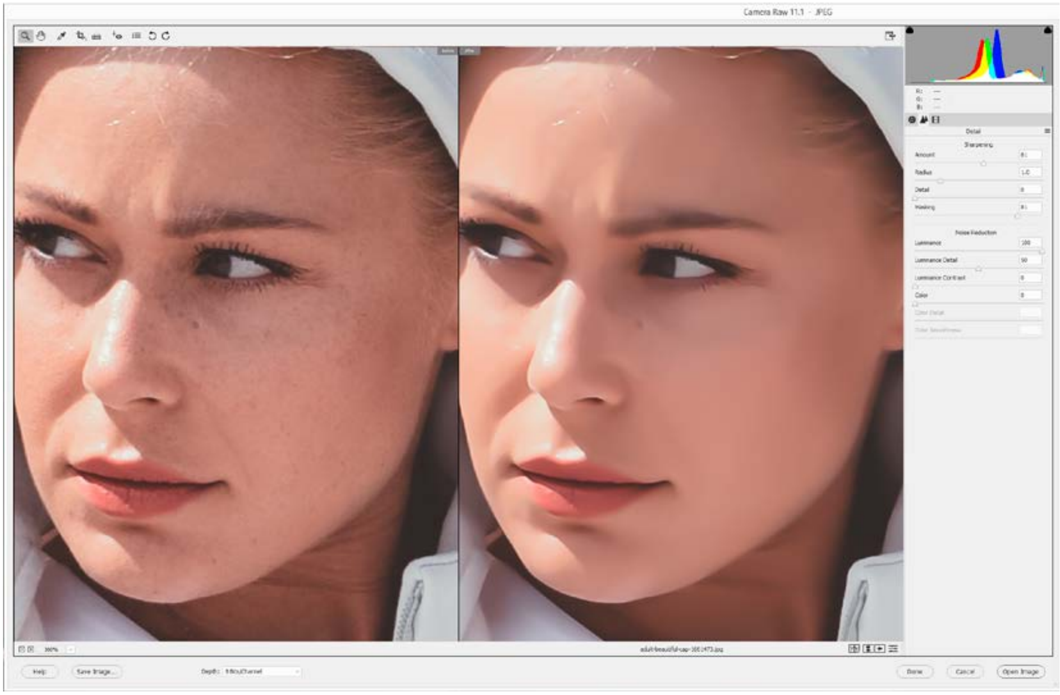
Another tip: Hold *Alt/Opt* while shifting the **Details** slider so it displays the added texture/detail emphasis it applies to the edges of the subject. Use this to fine-tune the mask effects further.

One problem you'll encounter when sharpening images is, if the file has been exposed using a high ISO number (such as 1,600 ISO+), chances are any sharpening will also increase the visual presence of **digital noise**, which is never a good look. Underneath the **Sharpening** panel, you'll find the **Noise Reduction** settings—use these to help reduce the unflattering effects too much noise produces.

Digital photos generally suffer from two kinds of noise: **luminance** and **color**.

Luminance noise is essentially graininess that appears in high-ISO images. Note that many cameras have built-in **noise reduction filters**, which are designed to reduce the negative effect of shooting at high ISO ratings. Some of these filters are quite effective, but, to be honest, I usually prefer to reduce the amount of noise using Photoshop Elements because it's easier to see what you are doing on a large computer screen. Once a camera has passed its noise reduction filter over the file, that's it—you can't reverse the process.

The second type of noise is color noise, and this produces an ugly, multi-colored pixelation, mostly in the dark, shady areas of the final file. We typically shoot at very high ISO numbers when the lighting is poor, and because noise is created by under-exposure; this is why we can see a lot of visual problems in photographs taken indoors, at night time, in the early morning, and anywhere you experience poor lighting.

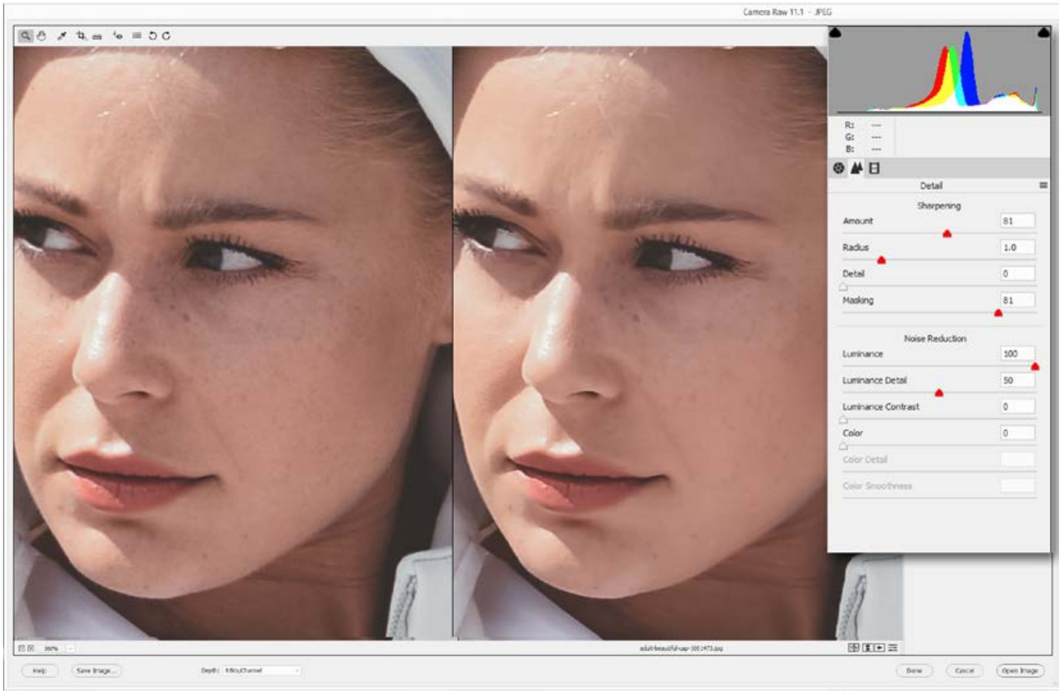

Camera Raw 11.1 - JPEG
Detail
Sharpening
Amount
Radius
Detail
Masking
Noise Reduction
Color Detail
Color Smoothness
Help
Save Image...
Depth:
Done
Cancel
Open Image

Luminance 100
Luminance Detail 50
Luminance Contrast 0
Color 0

Barbie doll look: It's very easy to add too much noise reduction. To remove ugly noise artifacts, the software has to effectively blur the image slightly, which, if not handled correctly, can make it look weird. In this example, I've added way too much noise reduction so that the skin tones not only appear smooth, but the subject has also lost all of her freckles.

When you look at the **Noise Reduction** panel underneath the **Sharpening** panel, you'll note that only the **Luminance** and the **Color** sliders are active. As soon as you shift that **Luminance** slider to the right, the **Luminance Detail** and **Luminance Contrast** sliders become active. Shift the main slider first to reduce the grittiness created by the noise, then fine-tune the results using these other two sliders. In reality, their effectiveness is very subtle, but persevere and they might reintroduce more detail into the image without increasing the noise.

If your image suffers from color noise, something my Canon files are particularly prone to exaggerate, then try shifting the **Color** slider to the right. This effectively turns the color speckling into black and white noise, something that most photographers can live with compared to ugly color-noise pollution.



Sharpening
Amount 81
Radius 1.0
Detail 0
Masking 81

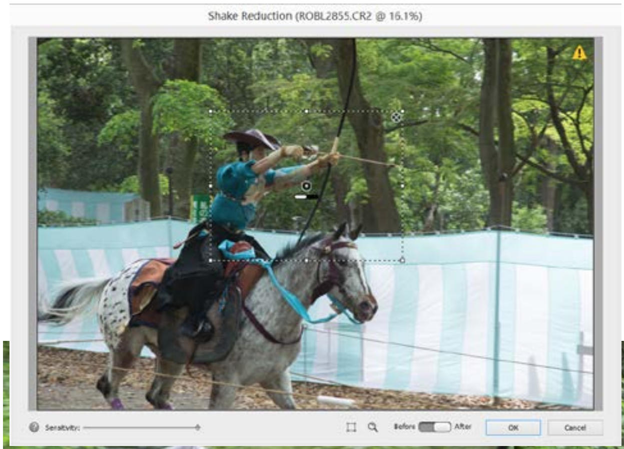
Noise Reduction
Luminance 100
Luminance Detail 50
Luminance Contrast 0
Color 0
Color Detail
Color Smoothness

Add some texture and detail back in the file: By manipulating the **Detail** sliders associated with both the **Sharpening** and **Noise Reduction** panels, it's possible to dial back some of the softness, and add some additional detail—all without significantly increasing the noise artifacts.

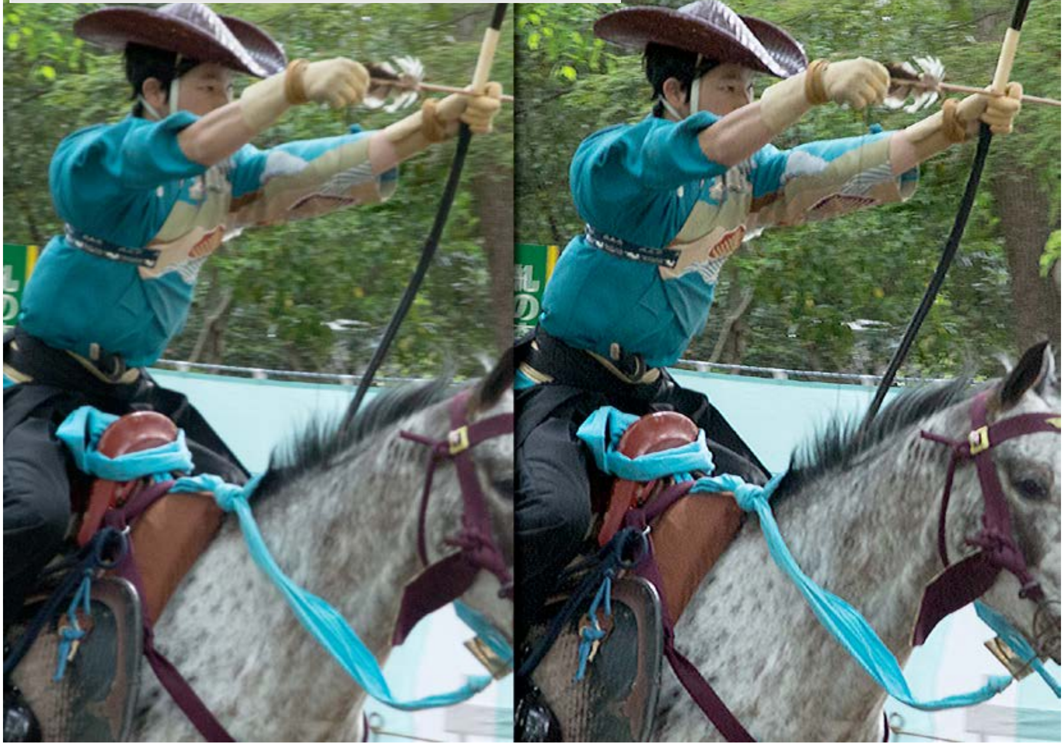
Of course, images are not all the same and will require a different amount of sharpening and treatment. I find that using the mask feature goes a long way in illustrating, in a very black and white way, how the sharpening process works and, more importantly, precisely where it is directed.

The Shake Reduction tool

As the name suggests, **Shake Reduction** (**Enhance**>**Shake Reduction**) is included in the sharpening itinerary and targets those pictures that are not 100% clear. I've always been a bit suspicious of tools like this because, let's face it, if the image is really blurred, there's little we can do to make it really sharp. This tool allows you to select a portion of the image onto which shake reduction, a processor-intensive process, can be imposed.

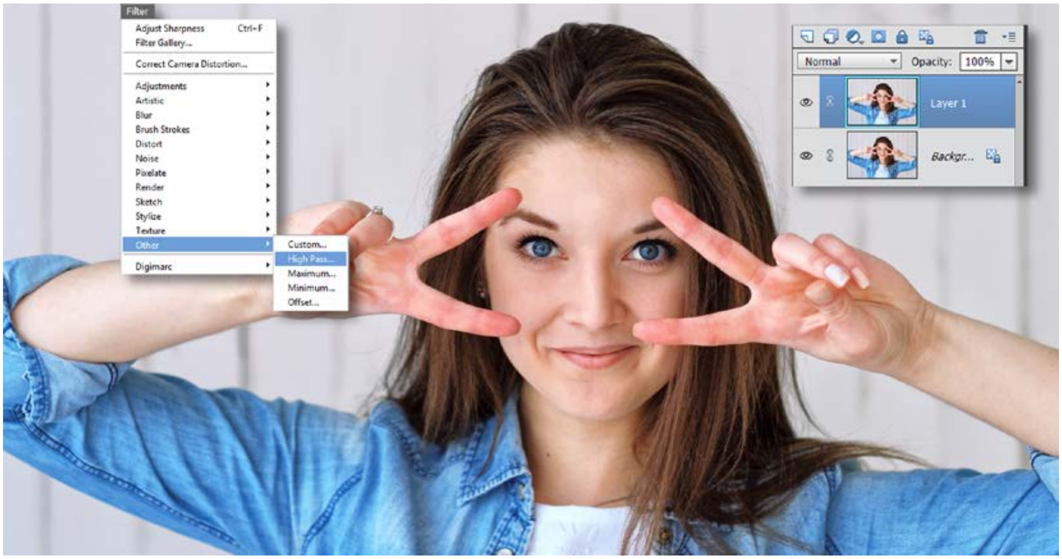


In the example seen here, I think it actually works well (improved on the right-hand side), but it won't work quite so well on all blurry images. Its efficiency depends on the degree of shake, and the area the problem covers in the file. But don't take my word for it—try it yourself and see whether it works on your images.



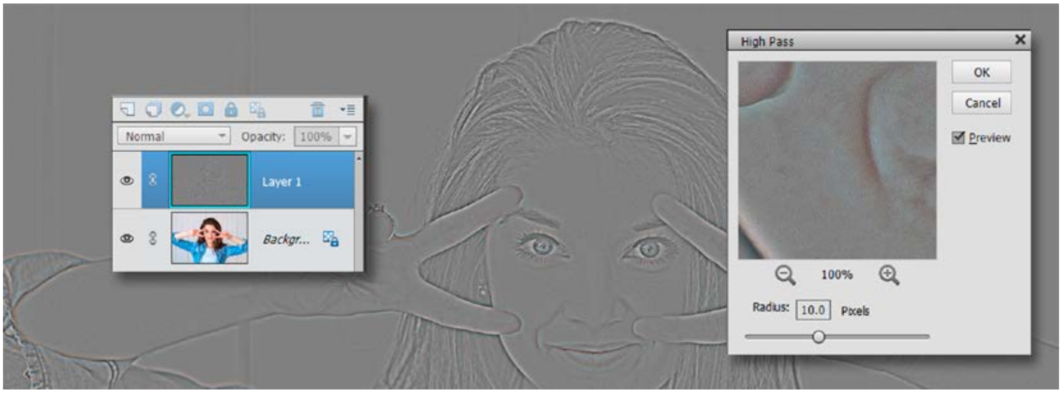
High Pass sharpening

Another useful way of applying sharpness to an image is to combine a fairly obscure filter, **High Pass,** with a layer Blend Mode. The **High Pass** filter applies a mid-gray mask over the image, which highlights differences in edge contrast—much like the masking feature we saw in the **Unsharp Mask** tool. The gray areas are exempt from sharpening while the lighter edges that you see in the gray field get sharper. If you really want your images to *pop*, try this using the **Hard Light** blend mode, although **Soft Light** and **Overlay** also work.


Filter
Adjust Sharpness Ctrl+F
Filter Gallery...
Correct Camera Distortion...
Adjustments
Artistic
Blur
Brush Strokes
Distort
Noise
Pixelate
Render
Sketch
Stylize
Texture
Other
Digimarc
Custom...
High Pass...
Maximum...
Minimum...
Offset...
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 1
Backgr...

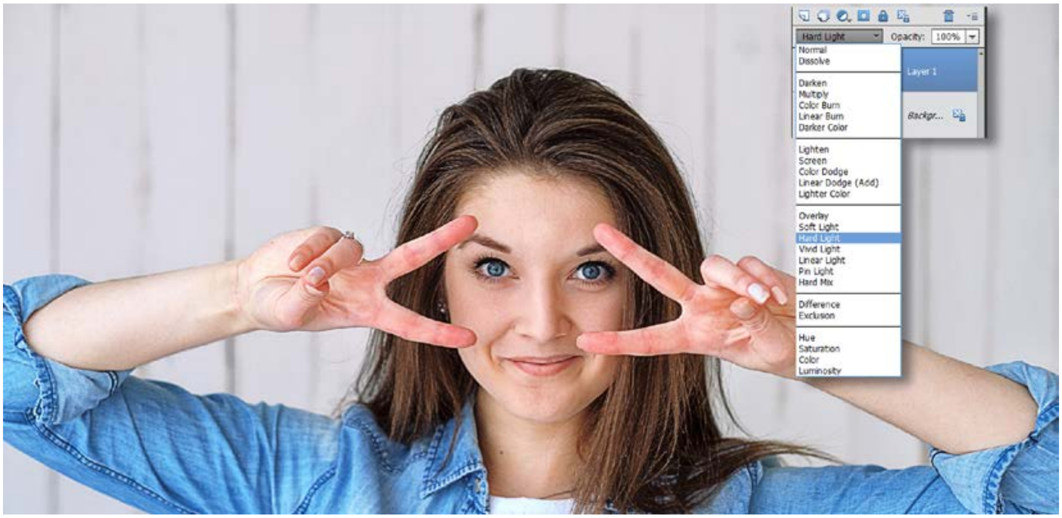
Step one: To achieve this technique, first duplicate the layer (**Layer**>**Duplicate**) and choose the **High Pass** filter from the **Filter**>**Other** menu.

Below: This is what the **High Pass** filter looks like at a value of 10 pixels. Weird. In essence, the popping effect we are about to see is added to the parts of the image that are not mid-gray—essentially, the highlighted edges of the subject only.


Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 1
Backgr...
High Pass
OK
Cancel
100%

☑ Preview

Radius: 10.0 Pixels

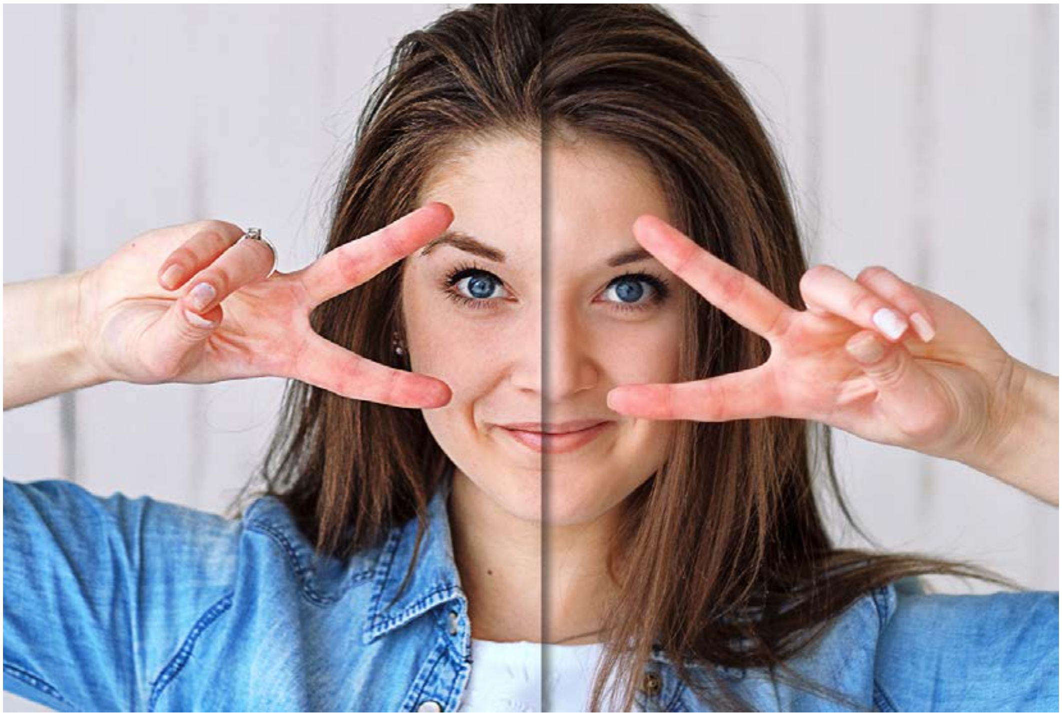


Hard Light

Opacity: 100%

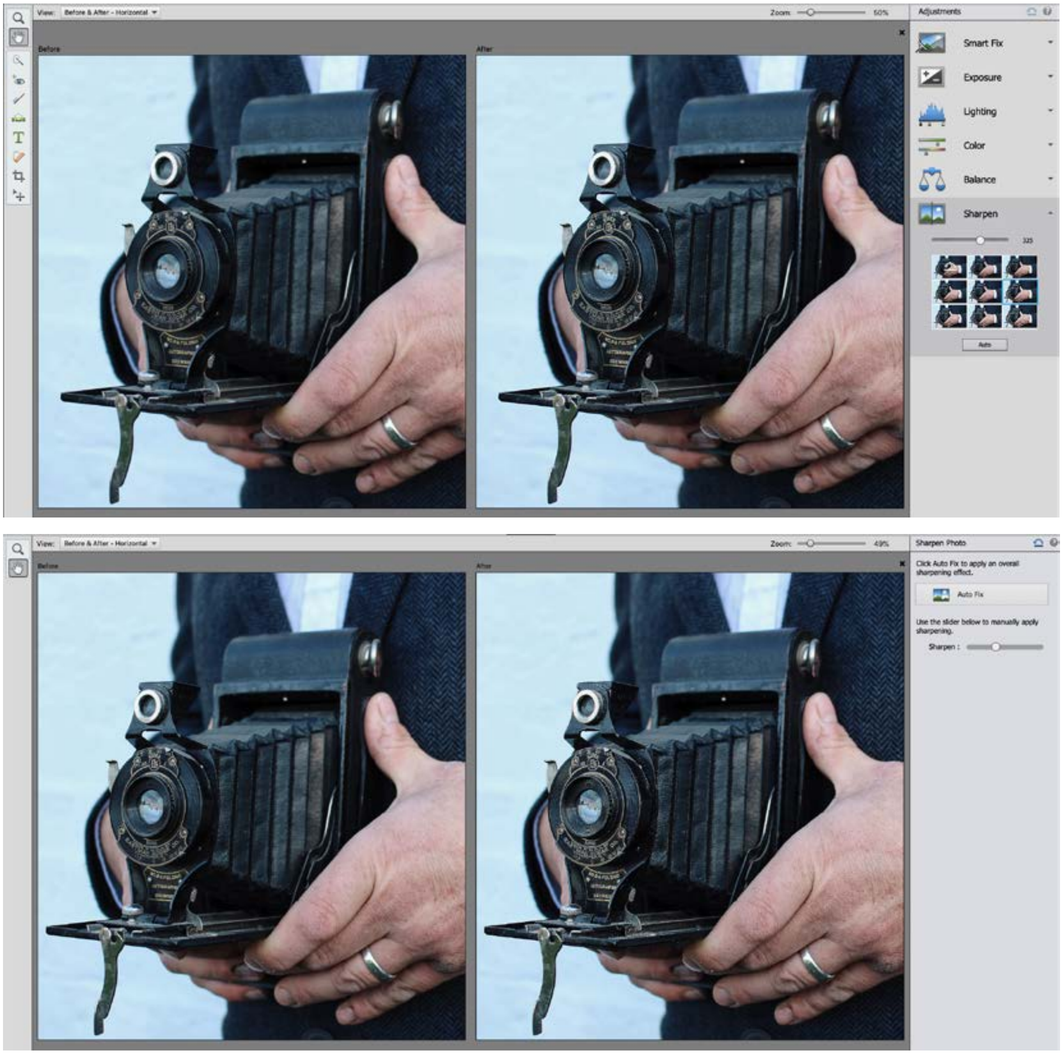
Normal
Dissolve
Darken
Multiply
Color Burn
Linear Burn
Darker Color
Lighten
Screen
Color Dodge
Linear Dodge (Add)
Lighter Color
Overlay
Soft Light
Hard Light
Vivid Light
Linear Light
Pin Light
Hard Mix
Difference
Exclusion
Hue
Saturation
Color
Luminosity
Layer 1
Backgr...

Step two: Change the duplicated layer's blend mode from the default, **Normal**, to **Overlay** or **Soft Light**, or even **Hard Light**. The former produces quite an abrupt change and **Soft Light** often produces the best, most natural result, while **Hard Light** is dramatic. **Comparison (below):** In this sample, I added the **Overlay** blend mode in the left-hand pane and left the right-hand side as the original to compare the look that was created. This is a simple and highly effective way to add a lot of visual drama to your work.



General sharpen filters

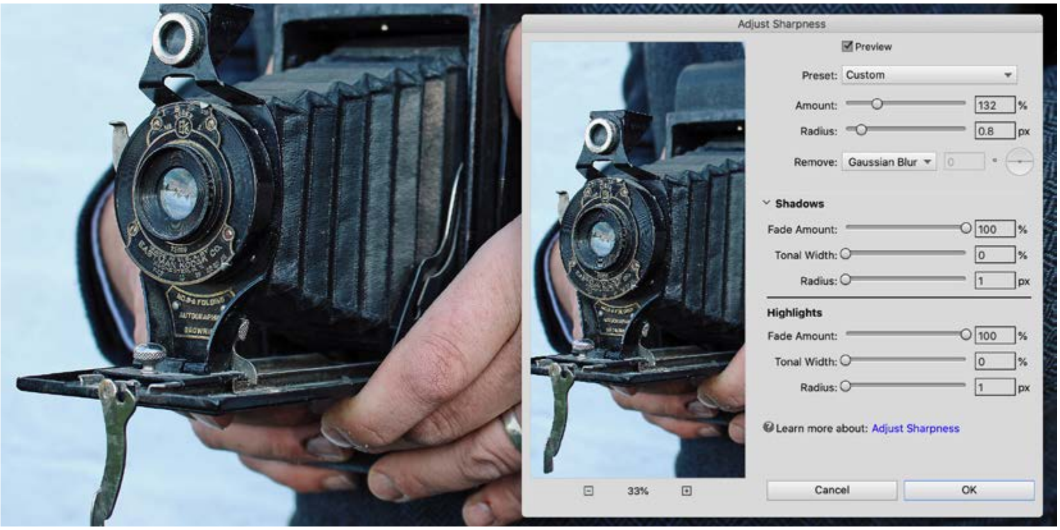
Elements has several other places where it's possible to add sharpness to an image. This includes the **Quick Edit** mode, the **Guided Edit** mode, and the **Adjust Sharpness** control under the **Enhance** menu in the **Expert** mode. All three work well but can be a little heavy-handed, and, of course, somewhat lacking in control, which is one good reason to use the better-featured unsharp Mask or adjust sharpness tools.


View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 50%
Before
After
Adjustments
Smart Fix
Exposure
Lighting
Color
Balance
Sharpen
325
Auto
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 49%
Before
After
Sharpen Photo
Auto Fix
Sharpen :

Click Auto Fix to apply an overall sharpening effect.

Use the slider below to manually apply sharpening.

General sharpening: Here are screenshots of two filters that you'll find in Photoshop Elements: the **Sharpen** feature (top) in the **Quick** Edit mode and, at the bottom, the **Sharpen Photo** panel, located in the **Guided** Edit mode.



Adjust Sharpness

☑ Preview

Preset: Custom

Amount: 132 %

Radius: 0.8 px

Remove: Gaussian Blur 0 °

Shadows

Fade Amount: 100 %

Tonal Width: 0 %

Radius: 1 px

Highlights

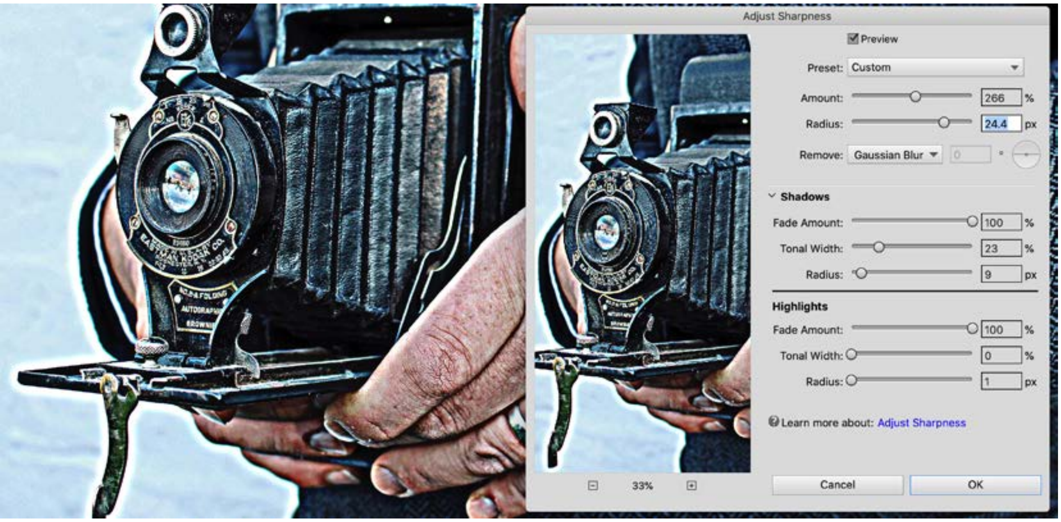
Fade Amount: 100 %

Tonal Width: 0 %

Radius: 1 px

Adjust Sharpness feature: I rarely use any of the auto sharpen filters because they don't offer much control. Even the **Sharpen** feature in **Guided** Edit mode is quite aggressive and hard to temper without the luxury of a mask. But, if you want a quick sharpening fix, try the **Adjust Sharpness** panel (under the **Enhance** menu). It's simpler than the **Unsharp Mask** tool (in **Camera RAW**). Use the **Amount** slider to increase/decrease the degree of contrast added to the edges, the **Radius** slider to control how wide that edge contrast is, and the **Remove** menu (which features **Lens blur**, **Gaussian blur**, and **Motion blur**) to mitigate the often-harsh effects of the sharpening process. The tool also provides scope to modify the sharpening effect in the shadows and highlights via the drop-down menu at the bottom of the panel, but in reality, its efficacy is almost negligible.

Final thought: I never fully understood why Adobe always left the sliders in features such as **Adjust Sharpness** with a scale that ran off the map. By dragging **Radius** to the right, you create an ugly halo. Avoid over-compensating like this at all costs.



Adjust Sharpness

☑ Preview

Preset: Custom

Amount: 266 %

Radius: 24.4 px

Remove: Gaussian Blur 0 °

Shadows

Fade Amount: 100 %

Tonal Width: 23 %

Radius: 9 px

Highlights

Fade Amount: 100 %

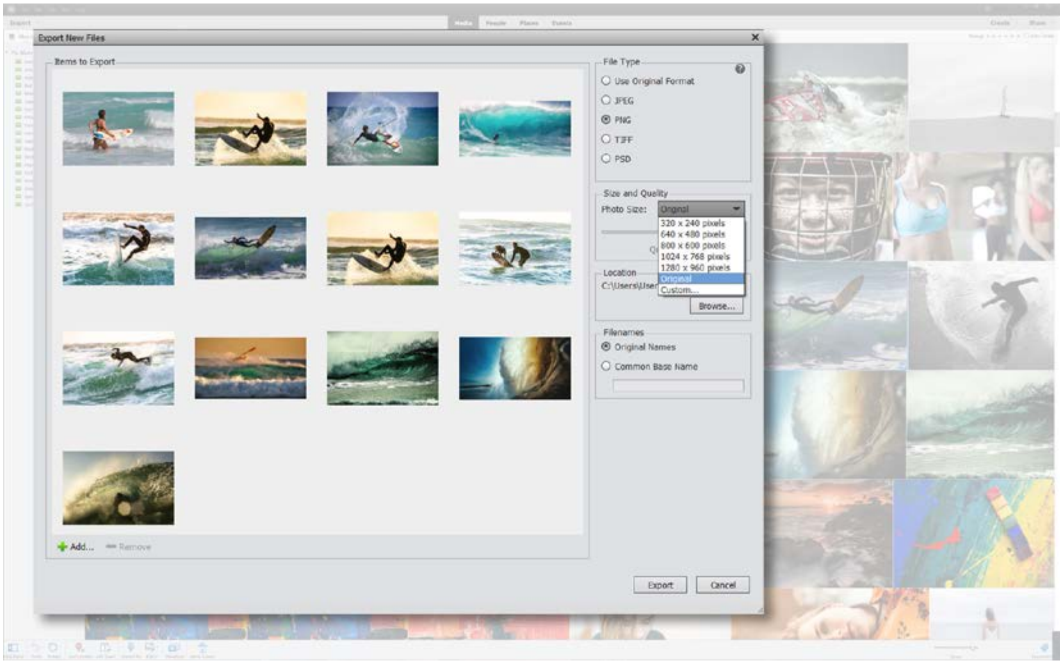
Tonal Width: 0 %

Radius: 1 px

Export as New Files

Resizing images one at a time in order to upload them to Facebook, Instagram, or another social media site is one technique that works well for a few images at a time. But if you have a lot of material you'd like to resize, and need it done fast, the Organizer's **Export as New Files** tool might be your best option.

It has many advantages. You can export a lot of images to a specified location, add a common name to all exports, change the file format, and even choose a specific image dimension. It takes around two minutes to export 200 images—so it's fast.

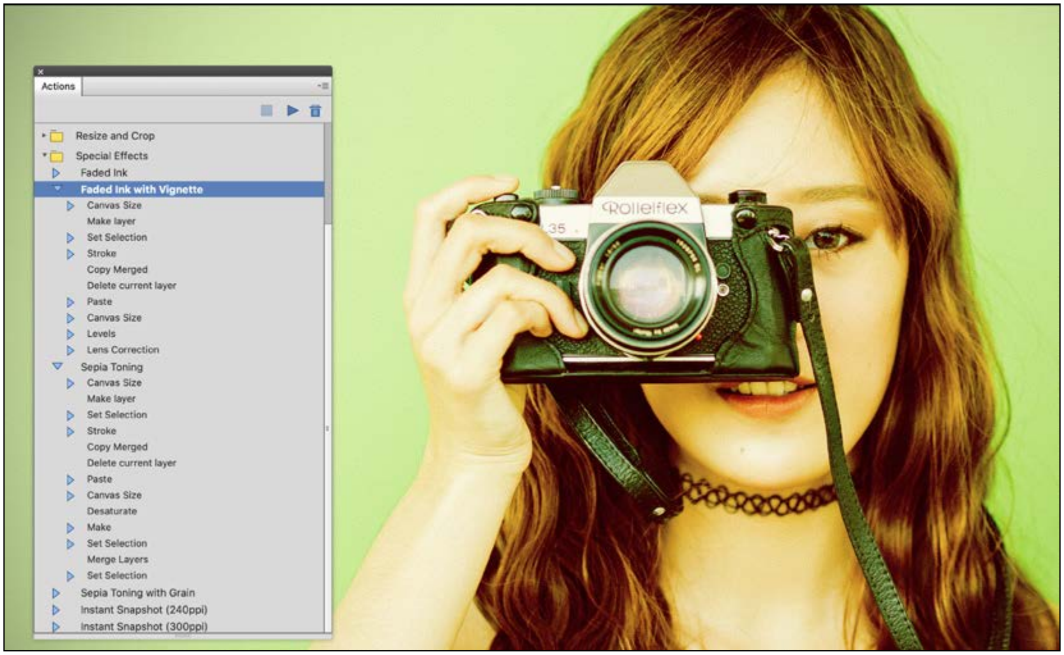

Export New Files
Items to Export
File Type
○ Use Original Format
○ JPEG
● PNG
○ TIFF
○ PSD
Size and Quality
Photo Size: Original
320 x 240 pixels
640 x 480 pixels
800 x 600 pixels
1024 x 768 pixels
1280 x 960 pixels
Original
Custom...
Location
C:\Users\User
Browse...
Filenames
● Original Names
○ Common Base Name
Add...
Remove
Export
Cancel

As you can see from the preceding screenshot, this feature is handy because it works right out of the Organizer (there's no need to open images in the editor first). It also allows you to add more into the **Export as New Files** window if you missed a few, then all that's needed is to change to the preferred file format (such as PNG or TIFF), choose a desired resolution, set the location where the exported images get saved to, and click **Export**.

It's a very neat little utility but one concern is that you can't save it at the best resolution to upload to Facebook (2,048 pixels). **Export as New Files** goes as high as 1,280 x 960 pixels. As a workaround, it's possible to use the **Custom** feature at the bottom of the drop-down **Size and Quality** menu. Enter `2,048` and `1,150` pixels. Note that this is never going to work 100% of the time because, although 2,048 is the correct measurement for the longest edge, the short edge will vary with every different camera file (because cameras have different-shaped sensors). If it's clearly distorting your exports, then turn to the **Process Multiple Files** utility (see next section) and reduce the images that way.

Process Multiple Files

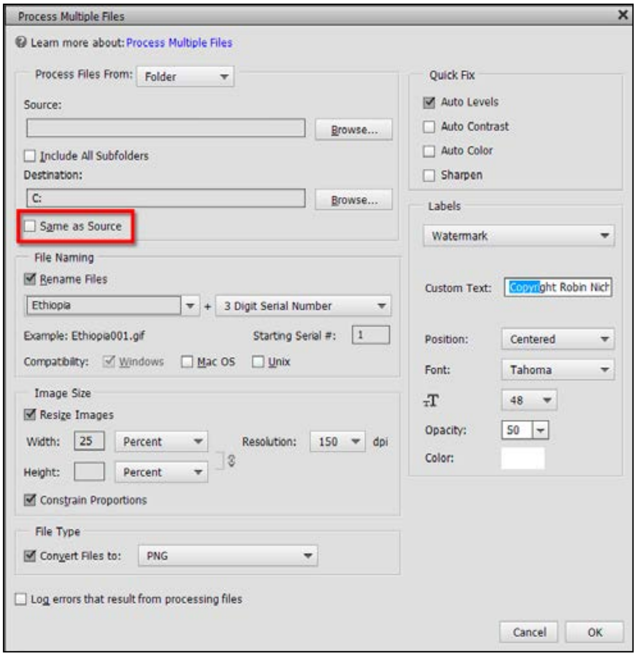
I don't think **Actions** (prerecorded edit processes that can be played on a batch of other files) in Photoshop Elements is a very strong feature because every action recorded originates from Photoshop CC (you cannot record actions in Elements). The ones that come with Elements work (there are 20 in all) but if you download any of the thousands available online, they might not work because its toolset is quite different. Have a look for yourself—you'll find the **Actions** panel under the **Window** menu (as shown in the following screenshot).


Actions
Resize and Crop
Special Effects
Faded Ink
Faded Ink with Vignette
Canvas Size
Make layer
Set Selection
Stroke
Copy Merged
Delete current layer
Paste
Canvas Size
Levels
Lens Correction
Sepia Toning
Canvas Size
Make layer
Set Selection
Stroke
Copy Merged
Delete current layer
Paste
Canvas Size
Desaturate
Make
Set Selection
Merge Layers
Set Selection
Sepia Toning with Grain
Instant Snapshot (240ppi)
Instant Snapshot (300ppi)
Rolleiflex
35

Features are offered by **Process Multiple Files** include the following:

- Renaming files
- Resizing files
- Converting files into a different format
- Adding a range of quick-fix edits
- Adding a caption or a simple **watermark**

Process Multiple Files, on the other hand, works brilliantly for many automated editing operations. For example, you can use it to **change the file format**, **reduce the file size**, and **add unique names** to files. And, as its name might suggest, you can use it to process a couple of files, or a few hundred in one go. Provided that it's set up correctly from the outset, you'll find that it's a handy tool that performs extremely quickly.


Process Multiple Files

Learn more about: Process Multiple Files

Process Files From: Folder

Source:

☐ Include All Subfolders

Destination: C:

☐ Same as Source

File Naming

☑ Rename Files

Ethiopia + 3 Digit Serial Number

Example: Ethiopia001.gif

Starting Serial #: 1

Compatibility: ☑ Windows ☐ Mac OS ☐ Unix

Image Size

☑ Resize Images

Width: 25 Percent

Height: Percent

Resolution: 150 dpi

☑ Constrain Proportions

File Type

☑ Convert Files to: PNG

☐ Log errors that result from processing files

Quick Fix

☑ Auto Levels

☐ Auto Contrast

☐ Auto Color

☐ Sharpen

Labels: Watermark

Custom Text: Copyright Robin Nich

Position: Centered

Font: Tahoma

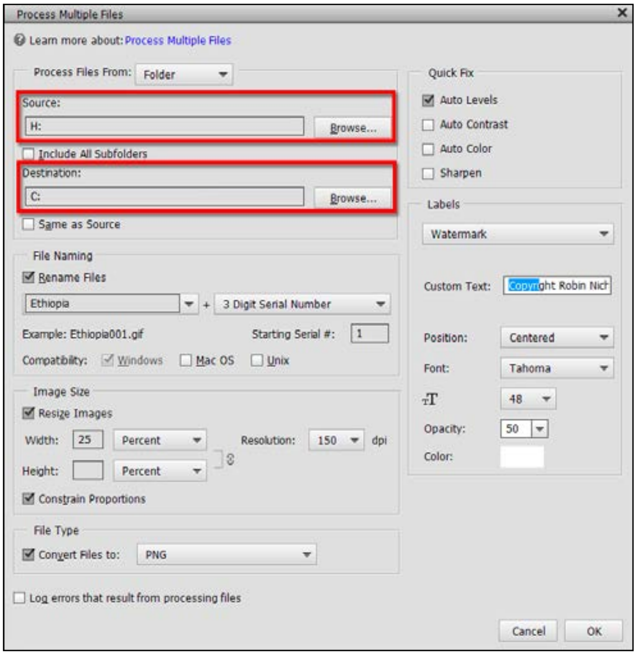
48

Opacity: 50

Color:

Step one: I put all of the images to be resized into the same folder, and then run **Process Multiple Files**, resetting the image size to a maximum of 1,000 pixels along the longest edge (this figure varies depending on your quality requirements).

Before you start the utility, you must first tell it where the originals are, and where the processed versions are to be saved. I think it's important to have two distinct folders for this: the **Source** and **Destination** folders (highlighted here in red).


Process Multiple Files

Learn more about: Process Multiple Files

Process Files From: Folder

Source: H:

☐ Include All Subfolders

Destination: C:

☐ Same as Source

File Naming

☑ Rename Files

Ethiopia + 3 Digit Serial Number

Example: Ethiopia001.gif

Starting Serial #: 1

Compatibility: ☑ Windows ☐ Mac OS ☐ Unix

Image Size

☑ Resize Images

Width: 25 Percent

Height: Percent

Resolution: 150 dpi

☑ Constrain Proportions

File Type

☑ Convert Files to: PNG

☐ Log errors that result from processing files

Quick Fix

☑ Auto Levels

☐ Auto Contrast

☐ Auto Color

☐ Sharpen

Labels: Watermark

Custom Text: Copyright Robin Nich

Position: Centered

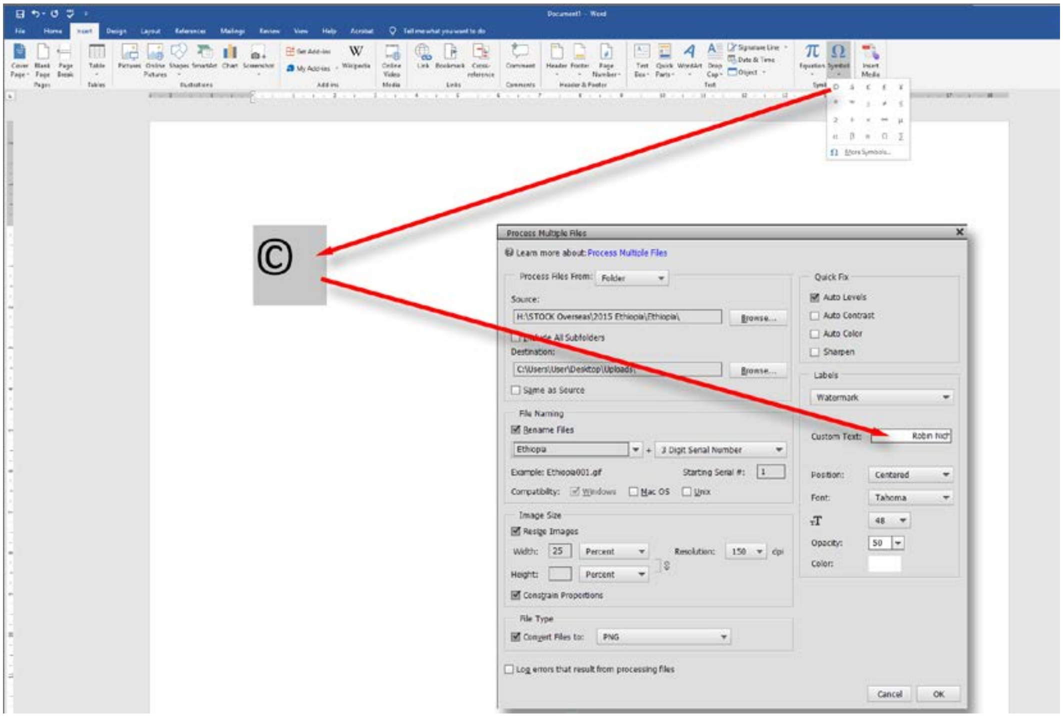
Font: Tahoma

48

Opacity: 50

Color:

Step two: Having set the source and destination locations, check the boxes for the processes required—**Process Multiple Files** will work on files that are already open, or you can take them from a specific folder. In my workflow, I typically edit my pictures, save them to a specific folder, and then create a new, empty folder on the desktop, which is used to store the processed files (I put them on the desktop so that they can be accessed easily). I mostly use this to **resize** image files and to save them in a different format (usually JPEG) but you can also apply **tonal changes** and even add a **watermark**. Hit the OK button and you are done. **Same as Source** means that your processed image files end up in the same folder as the originals. I have two problems with doing this. Firstly, I'm always nervous about accidentally overwriting the originals and secondly, once done, you might have 400 originals and 400 edited files—which then have to be separated. It's far quicker to have them delivered, once processed, into a prearranged folder.



Process Files From: Folder

Source: H:\STOCK Overseas\2015 Ethiopia\Ethiopia\

☐ Include All Subfolders

Destination: C:\Users\User\Desktop\Uploads\

☐ Same as Source

File Naming

☑ Rename Files

Ethiopia + 3 Digit Serial Number

Example: Ethiopia001.gif Starting Serial #: 1

Compatibility: ☑ Windows ☐ Mac OS ☐ Unix

Image Size

☑ Resize Images

Width: 25 Percent Resolution: 150 dpi

Height: Percent

☑ Constrain Proportions

File Type

☑ Convert Files to: PNG

☐ Log errors that result from processing files

Quick Fix

☑ Auto Levels

☐ Auto Contrast

☐ Auto Color

☐ Sharpen

Labels

Watermark

Custom Text: Robin Nich

Position: Centered

Font: Tahoma

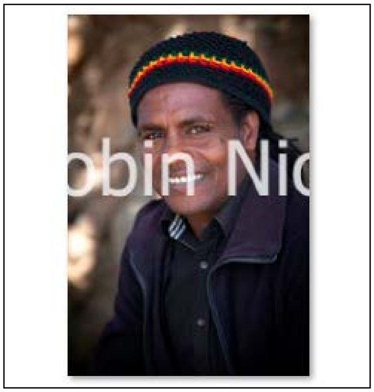
48

Opacity: 50

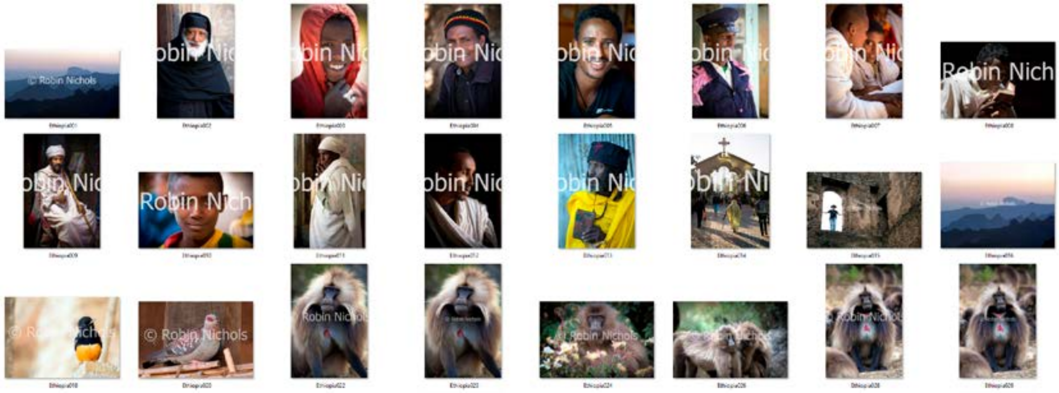
Color:

Adding a copyright stamp: This is another good feature that's highly useful for photographers (but a little difficult to control). Note that the tiny field into which you type your personalized copyright message can contain more characters than it can display (even if the field appears full, you can continue typing—but bear in mind that too many characters will be cut off).

By default, the program adds 50% opacity to the custom text—you can set it to a slightly lower opacity if required so that your copyright warning doesn't obscure the impact of the image. To add a copyright symbol, I use MS Word (the symbol is pictured above), but there are a number of other ways to find and place this symbol that I won't go into here.



Copyright stamp not fitting the image?
This is what happens when the files being processed are different resolutions. The copyright stamp has been set for the original high-res files, but there were some smaller resolution files in there too—these are not big enough to accommodate the overlay. Verticals also suffer from the same issue—in this case, it might be best to run **Process Multiple Files** twice, once on horizontal files and once on vertical files.



Correct copyright size: This is what your result should look like (this is using Windows Photo Viewer): a big copyright statement through the middle of the frame, making it hard for even a skilled image retoucher to steal your work. From experience, I know that it's often quite hard to get the copyright stamp in the right proportion to the images—we all have different camera sensors, and we mostly work using different proportioned images. I experimented several times before I got the percentage reduction correct—then again a few times to get the text point size at an agreeable height—not too small but not too large either. **Process Multiple Files** is very fast so it takes no time at all to figure it all out.

Tip:

For down-, or upsizing files, the options offered in this panel include **Inches**, **Pixels**, **Centimeters**, **Millimeters**, and **Percent**. For my own workflow, the best option is to choose **Pixels** because I can then reduce everything to a maximum pixel width of 1,000.

Unfortunately, you will run into trouble doing this if your folder contains vertical and horizontal files (because they'll come out at different sizes). If this is the case, either put your vertical pictures into one folder and your horizontal pictures into another and run the **Process Multiple Files** feature twice, or choose to reduce both vertical and horizontal images by a percentage. Elements opens, processes, and saves your files incredibly quickly—processing 100 images will only take a few minutes at most.

Keyboard shortcuts

Here are a few handy keyboard shortcuts that fit nicely with the topics we discussed in this chapter:

- **Export as New Files**: *Ctrl/Cmd + E*
- Change resolution and image size: **Image**>**Resize**>**Image Size**
- Copy, resize, name, and format change images in bulk: **File**>**Export as New Files** (**Organizer**)
- Copy, resize, name, add tone changes, file format changes, add a copyright stamp, and export in bulk: **File**>**Process Multiple Files**
- Send the current image to a local printer: **File**>**Print**
- Optimize the image for best online web display: **File**>**Save for Web**
- Open non-RAW files in the **Camera RAW** editor: **File**>**Open in Camera RAW**
- Used in conjunction with a layer blend mode to make image sharpness *pop*: **Filter**>**Other**>**High Pass**
- Add mid-tone contrast to remove haze and mist and to make tones *pop*: **Enhance**>**Haze Removal**

Summary

Exporting your work is the final process of the Elements workflow. In this chapter, we have summarized resolution by looking at the different settings that are required for a range of social media and print spaces. We also looked at the features Elements offers for preparing images for export, including **Save for Web**, **Sharpening**, and **Haze Removal**, and exporting to various places on the computer and cloud. Don't forget to try the excellent **Process Multiple Files** feature—this is one of those often-missed little gems that can be used to really speed up output.

Our next chapter discusses what to do if image-making goes wrong. In that chapter, we'll be discussing how to reinstate a lost or damaged catalog, how to search for missing files, and how to work with the excellent **Find** menu—a powerhouse of search options. There's also a section about how to add new pixels to a file (resampling), how to fix grossly overexposed or underexposed images, how to make blurry images appear sharper, and how to copy and paste body parts from one image into another using the amazing Photomerge **Face Swap** utility.

At the end of that chapter, I will run through a couple more composition helpers, most notably the **Content-aware Move** tool and the **Recompose** tool.

10

Troubleshooting

Nothing ever goes entirely to plan when shooting pictures, which is why we use Photoshop Elements to help fine-tune things such as **composition**, **color**, and **image clarity**. But even then, things can still go wrong with the software.

Adobe does a great job of updating the security and stability of Photoshop Elements, but since almost everything in this industry is updated or replaced every few months, it's not surprising that problems can arise from time to time.

In this section, you will find the solutions to some of the most common imaging problems, including catalog issues, lost files, poor color results, and much more.

What you'll learn from this chapter:

- File Saving issues
- Finding lost/disconnected files
- Using the **Find** menu
- Missing keywords
- Adjusting metadata for different time zones
- Reinstating the catalog
- Resampling – adding or subtracting pixels
- Adjust color for skin tones
- Remove color cast
- Liquify filter
- Using the **Help** menu

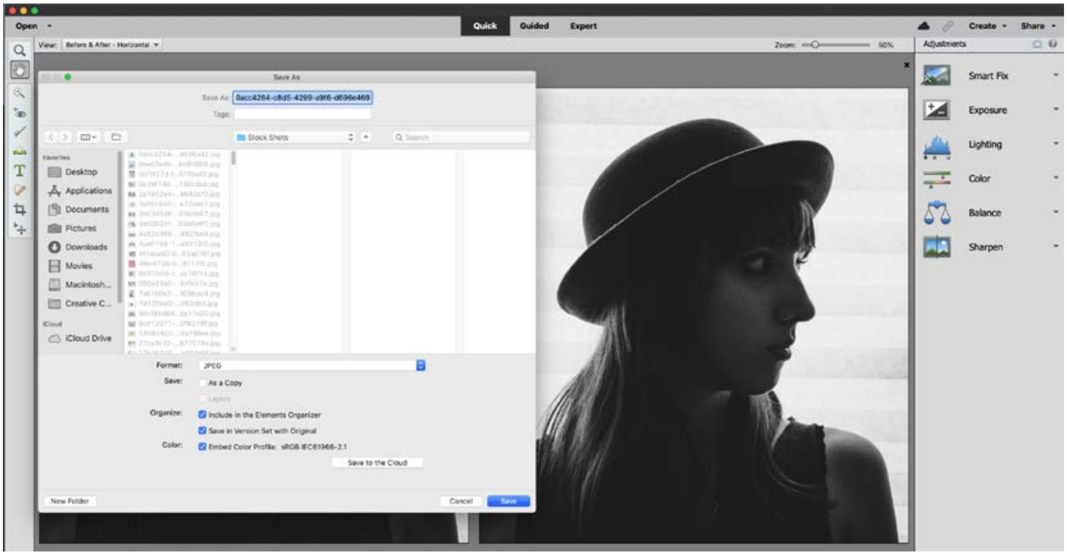
File saving issues

I see many photographers lose their entire image collections from time to time—it can be very frustrating, for me as a teacher and of course, for them, as they have no idea what happened nor where everything disappeared to! However, there are several ways to prevent this from happening.

Firstly, don't just click **OK** whenever asked—it pays to look at the **Save** or **Save As** panel in respect of where it's going to put your stuff.

As a rule, Elements will always save a file back to the same location where it was opened from—so if you just saved something then wondered where it went, take a look in the folder that it lives in.

If you open a holiday snap, via Organizer (let's say it was originally imported from a folder called `Vacations`), then edit it, and choose **Save** (**File>Save or** *Ctrl/Cmd + S*). Where did it go? It went back into the `Vacations` folder, so that's a good place to start looking.


Open
Quick
Guided
Expert
Create
Share
View: Before & After - Horizontal
Zoom: 50%
Adjustments
Smart Fix
Exposure
Lighting
Color
Balance
Sharpen
Favorites
Desktop
Applications
Documents
Pictures
Downloads
Movies
Macintosh...
Creative C...
iCloud
iCloud Drive
Search
Save to the Cloud
New Folder
Cancel
Save

Save As

Save As: 0acc4264-c8d5-4299-a9f6-d696e469

Tags:

Stock Shots

Format: JPEG

Save: ☐ As a Copy

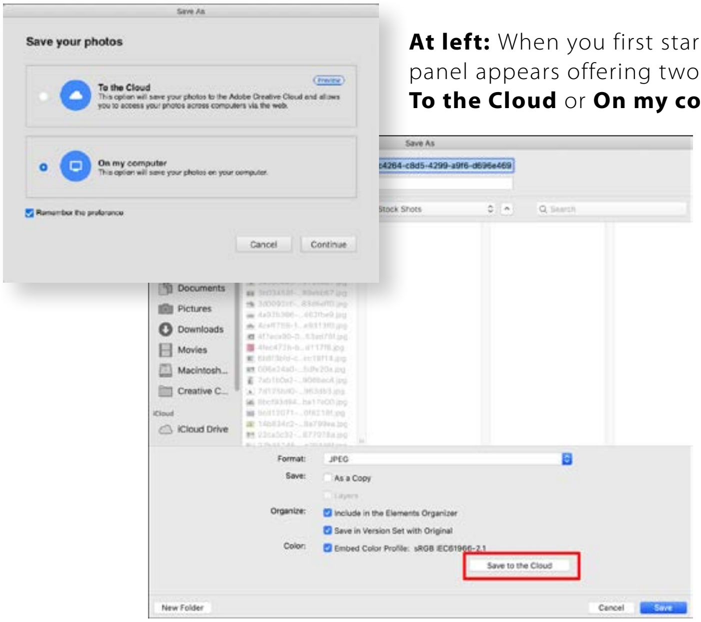
☐ Layers

Organize: ☑ Include in the Elements Organizer

☑ Save in Version Set with Original

Color: ☑ Embed Color Profile: sRGB IEC61966-2.1

The **Save As** panel also has the option of saving the edited version back into the Organizer. If you are harnessing the power of this file browser, it makes a heap of sense to keep this checked at all times. Elements also has a habit, sometimes annoyingly, of forcing files to be saved as a copy—not something I'd prefer in many cases. In fact, I usually want the application to deliberately overwrite the file as it's updated, rather then having five or six versions of the same image—even though I'd only ever use the latest version. It's an inbuilt protection mechanism so those who are not watching all the time, don't do what I just mentioned: overwrite files.



Save your photos

To the Cloud
This option will save your photos to the Adobe Creative Cloud and allows you to access your photos across computers via the web.

On my computer
This option will save your photos on your computer.

☑ Remember the preference

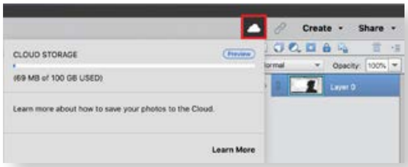
Format: JPEG
Save: ☐ As a Copy
☐ Layers
Organize: ☑ Include in the Elements Organizer
☑ Save in Version Set with Original
Color: ☑ Embed Color Profile: sRGB IEC61966-2.1

Save As
Preview
Cancel
Continue
c4264-c8d5-4299-a9f6-d696e469
Stock Shots
Search
Documents
Pictures
Downloads
Movies
Macintosh...
Creative C...
iCloud
iCloud Drive
Save to the Cloud
New Folder
Cancel
Save

At left: When you first start Elements and save a file, this panel appears offering two locations to save your work: **To the Cloud** or **On my computer**. Choose one.

New Save As option: Photoshop Elements 2021 has a new option in its **File>Save As** panel: **Save to the Cloud**.

Your Adobe account should provide 2 GB of cloud storage, which will fill up quickly—then you can top it up by paying Adobe for more storage space.

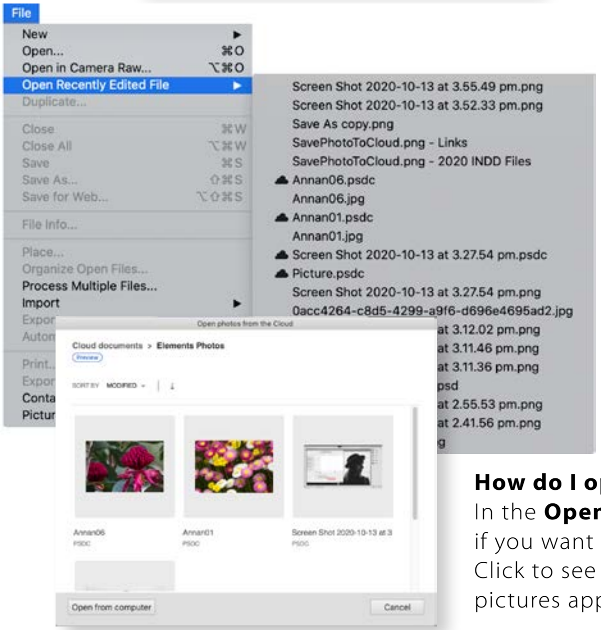


CLOUD STORAGE
(69 MB of 100 GB USED)

Learn more about how to save your photos to the Cloud.

Create
Share
Preview
Normal
Opacity: 100%
Layer 0
Learn More

How much storage space is left? How do you keep track of your cloud usage? Click the cloud icon (top right-hand side of the Photo Editor), and the pop-out panel displays how much you have in the bank.



File
New
Open... ⌘O
Open in Camera Raw... ⌥⌘O
Open Recently Edited File
Duplicate...
Close ⌘W
Close All ⌥⌘W
Save ⌘S
Save As... ⇧⌘S
Save for Web... ⌥⇧⌘S
File Info...
Place...
Organize Open Files...
Process Multiple Files...
Import
Expor
Autom
Print...
Expor
Conta
Pictur
Screen Shot 2020-10-13 at 3.55.49 pm.png
Screen Shot 2020-10-13 at 3.52.33 pm.png
Save As copy.png
SavePhotoToCloud.png - Links
SavePhotoToCloud.png - 2020 INDD Files
Annan06.psdc
Annan06.jpg
Annan01.psdc
Annan01.jpg
Screen Shot 2020-10-13 at 3.27.54 pm.psdc
Picture.psdc
Screen Shot 2020-10-13 at 3.27.54 pm.png
0acc4264-c8d5-4299-a9f6-d696e4695ad2.jpg
at 3.12.02 pm.png
at 3.11.46 pm.png
at 3.11.36 pm.png
psd
at 2.55.53 pm.png
at 2.41.56 pm.png
g
Open photos from the Cloud
Cloud documents > Elements Photos
Preview
SORT BY MODIFIED
Annan06
PSDC
Annan01
PSDC
Screen Shot 2020-10-13 at 3
PSDC
Open from computer
Cancel

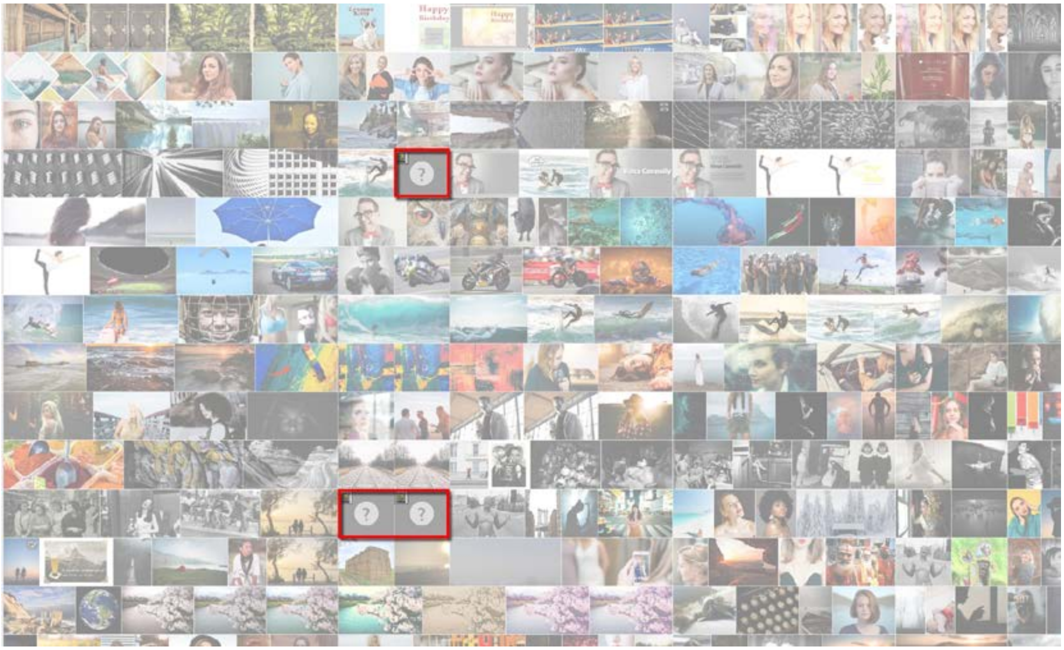
How do I open images from my cloud account? It's easy enough to click the **Save to the Cloud** button on the **Save As** panel, but how do you find stuff that you uploaded weeks ago? One way is to use the standard **File>Open Recently Edited File** menu—seen here—but this will only display 20 or so past files. Cloud files have a small **cloud icon** next to the filename.

How do I open images from the cloud? #2 In the **Open** panel, you'll find a button asking if you want to open an image from the cloud. Click to see this screen (on the left)—your cloud pictures appear, ready for selection.

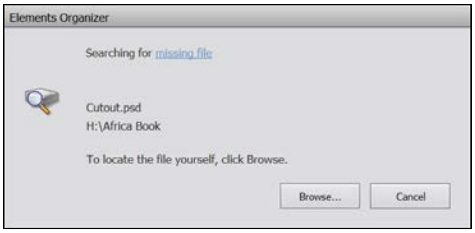
Finding lost or disconnected files

Elements keeps all your original files, plus all your edited material, displayed in the Organizer – but only if you ask it to by checking the **Include in the Elements Organizer** box in the **File**>**Save As** window. That's the theory, but as we all know, in real life, things rarely go 100% to plan. Pictures can get corrupted, get lost, or just go missing. The following are a few strategies to initiate if you can't find images you thought were already imported and part of Elements' Organizer.

On any typical day, you might see a missing file or two in the **Media** area of **Organizer**. In my experience, Elements is very good at finding these errant files, providing it has the time (that is, you don't cancel the search prematurely) and that it is still in existence (that is, the image has not been deleted or renamed).



Check the Organizer: If your image was originally imported into the **Organizer**, but has disappeared for whatever reason, you will still be able to see its **thumbnail icon** in the main **Organizer** window – even if it's just a question mark. Despite the fact that the original image might be ***missing***, Elements remembers what the file's name was and immediately searches for it. Double-click the thumbnail for the missing file and you'll see the following **Elements Organizer** screen: **Searching for missing file**. It might take a few minutes, or more, but providing that the missing file has not been deleted, it will be located.



Elements Organizer

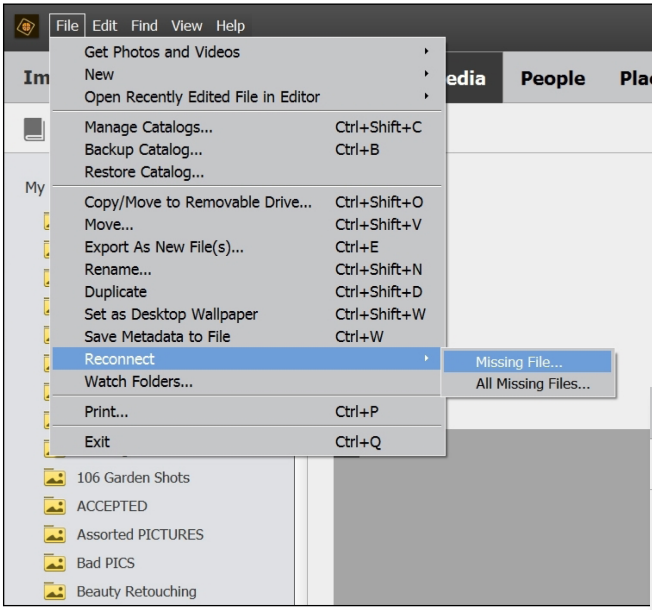
Searching for missing file

Cutout.psd
H:\Africa Book

To locate the file yourself, click Browse.

Browse...
Cancel

Double-click the thumbnail to let the **Organizer** know you want to enlarge the file to full size. If it's lost the **connection** to the original file, you'll see this **Search** panel appear. If you leave it long enough, Elements will find that missing file – providing the original is still on your drive. Elements' ability to locate lost files makes it one of the best picture editing programs.

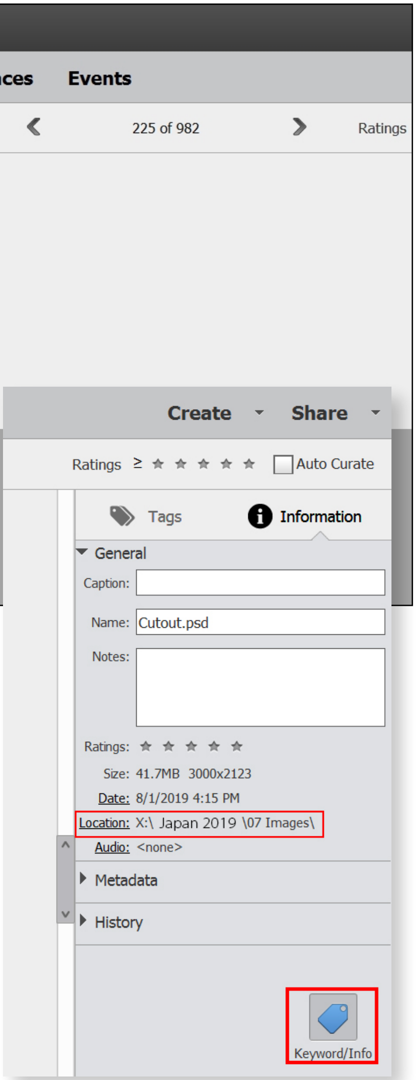


File
Edit
Find
View
Help
Im
My
Get Photos and Videos
New
Open Recently Edited File in Editor
Manage Catalogs... Ctrl+Shift+C
Backup Catalog... Ctrl+B
Restore Catalog...
Copy/Move to Removable Drive... Ctrl+Shift+O
Move... Ctrl+Shift+V
Export As New File(s)... Ctrl+E
Rename... Ctrl+Shift+N
Duplicate Ctrl+Shift+D
Set as Desktop Wallpaper Ctrl+Shift+W
Save Metadata to File Ctrl+W
Reconnect
Watch Folders...
Print... Ctrl+P
Exit Ctrl+Q
Missing File...
All Missing Files...
106 Garden Shots
ACCEPTED
Assorted PICTURES
Bad PICS
Beauty Retouching

If, for whatever reason, Elements cannot find and reconnect a missing file but you know where it has been moved to, try choosing **File**>**Reconnect**>**All Missing Files...**, or simply move the file to where it should be and try again, as shown in the preceding screenshot.

Inset on the right: To find where an image *should be* (or where it was before it got *lost*), check out the path in the **Keyword/Info** panel on the right-hand side of the main Organizer window.

Make sure the **Information** tab is checked, then look for the **Location** link in the **General** comments area.



edia
People
Places
Events
225 of 982
Ratings
Create
Share
Ratings ≥ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
☐ Auto Curate
Tags
Information
General
Metadata
History
Keyword/Info

Caption:

Name: Cutout.psd

Notes:

Ratings: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Size: 41.7MB 3000x2123

Date: 8/1/2019 4:15 PM

Location: X:\ Japan 2019 \07 Images\

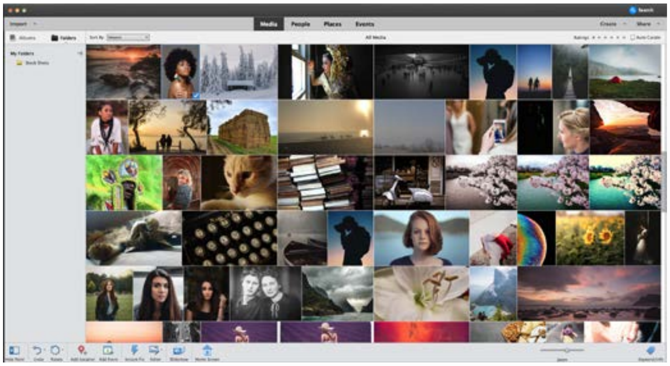
Audio: <none>

Using the Find menu

The **Find** menu is perhaps the most useful tool in the arsenal of search functions found in Elements. With this drop-down menu, you can search through the following categories:

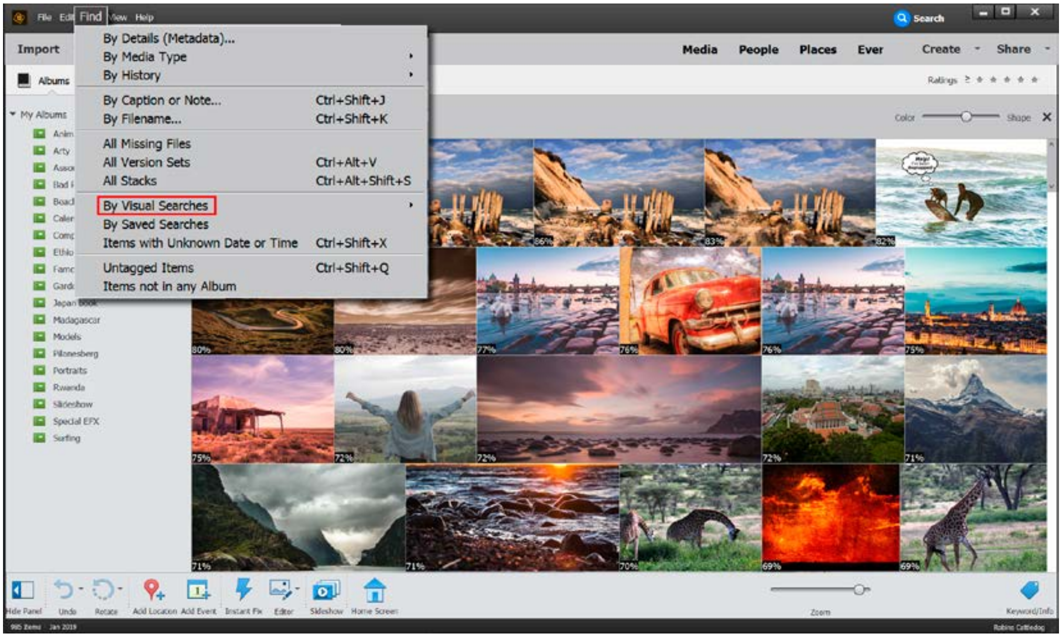
- **Metadata** (including camera and shooting details)
- **Media Type** (such as photos, video, audio, projects, and items with audio captions
- **History** (including **Imported on**, **Emailed to**, **Printed on**, **Exported on**, **Shared Online**, **Used in Projects**)
- **Caption**
- **Filename**, including the following:
  - **a) Version Set**
  - **b) Stack**
  - **c) Untagged items**
- **Visual Search** (including visually similar photos and videos, objects appearing in the photo, or duplicate photos)
- **Saved Searches**

You can even search for an image using terms such as **Items with Unknown Date or Time**, **Untagged Items**, or even **Items not in any Album**:

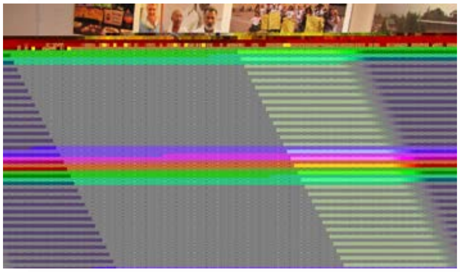


Tip:

Although mentioned at the start of this book, it's worth reiterating the point—when Adobe states that you "import" assets into the Organizer, what it actually does is create links to your files wherever they might be stored. Nothing is physically moved or copied into the Organizer; instead, it's just linked to wherever the files have been stored. This is a good thing in case you ever have to reinstall the program because of a computer malfunction or hardware issue. But it can be bad if you habitually move or rename files using only the computer's finder system (Mac or PC), and not through Elements itself. Avoid doing this because it will create lost files—Elements can usually find them providing the name is the same but why waste time? Do everything either before you import into Elements, or through Elements itself, and you should be good to go.


File
Edit
Find
View
Help
Search
Import
Media
People
Places
Ever
Create
Share
Albums
My Albums
By Details (Metadata)...
By Media Type
By History
By Caption or Note... Ctrl+Shift+J
By Filename... Ctrl+Shift+K
All Missing Files
All Version Sets Ctrl+Alt+V
All Stacks Ctrl+Alt+Shift+S
By Visual Searches
By Saved Searches
Items with Unknown Date or Time Ctrl+Shift+X
Untagged Items Ctrl+Shift+Q
Items not in any Album
Ratings
Color
Shape
Madagascar
Models
Pilanesberg
Portraits
Rwanda
Slideshow
Special EFX
Surfing
86%
83%
82%
80%
80%
77%
76%
76%
75%
75%
72%
72%
72%
71%
71%
71%
70%
69%
69%
Hide Panel
Undo
Rotate
Add Location
Add Event
Instant Fix
Editor
Slideshow
Home Screen
Zoom
Keyword/Info

In this screenshot, I searched for images that were visually similar to the one I originally picked. The result was immediate, finding and ranking the other three files that were near-identical in a few seconds. Although the image of a man and his dog on a surfboard has an 82% visual match to the original landscape, that is not considered a close match. When considering the distance between Elements' successful choices (the three most similar landscapes and ***the rest***), an 82% match is actually far down the list. The **Find** menu has a very comprehensive list. Personally, I find the ***visually similar*** search quite useful. It doesn't get it right all the time, as you can see in the preceding example, but when it does get it right, it can save you a heap of time.



Damaged files?

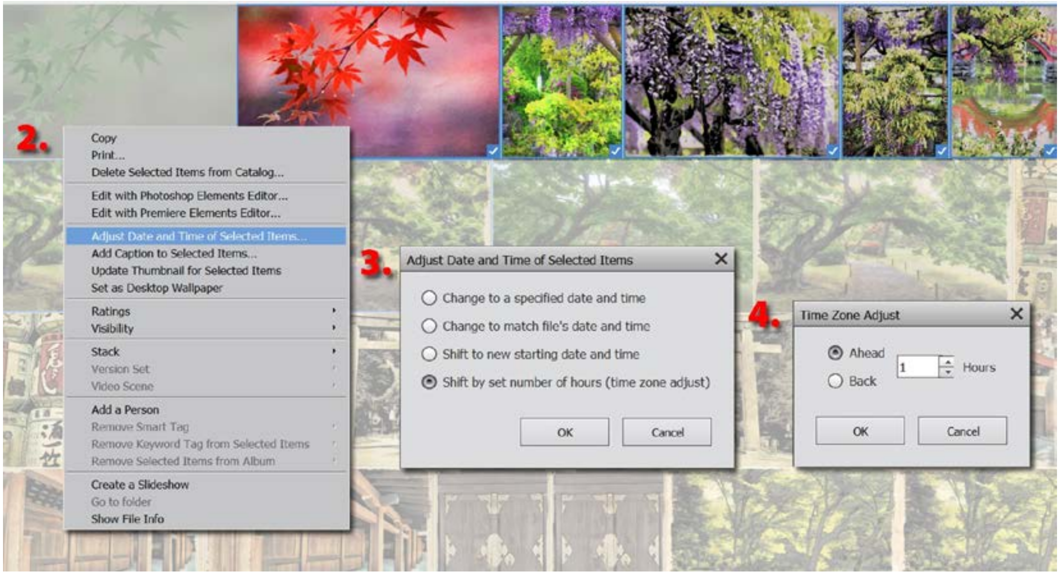
Occasionally, you might have an issue with a damaged file. This can happen for any number of reasons but the result is the same: Elements cannot read the file, so you don't get to edit it.

Damage can occur if the memory card is interrupted while photos are downloading from the camera, if the camera itself gets damaged, or if the file loses its name. If the card has been compromised, try downloading data recovery software (internet), or take it to a data recovery service (expensive). Damage also occurs because the filename has been changed. Simply finding the file (via the computer browser) and renaming it—making sure the file format suffix is correct (`.jpg`, `.tif`, `.psd`)—might be all it takes to bring it back to life.

Adjusting dates for different time zones

One thing that's going to mess up a photo search is if the date is set incorrectly on your camera. If you fail to set the proper date, the results of the Elements search will be inaccurate, because it'll be hunting for a different date.

Even if the date on your camera is set correctly, you must also be aware of time travel! Traveling across a different **time zone** will also throw your searches into a state of confusion. Traveling north or south is not the issue, but moving from east to west can confuse any search parameter.


2.
Copy
Print...
Delete Selected Items from Catalog...
Edit with Photoshop Elements Editor...
Edit with Premiere Elements Editor...
Adjust Date and Time of Selected Items...
Add Caption to Selected Items...
Update Thumbnail for Selected Items
Set as Desktop Wallpaper
Ratings
Visibility
Stack
Version Set
Video Scene
Add a Person
Remove Smart Tag
Remove Keyword Tag from Selected Items
Remove Selected Items from Album
Create a Slideshow
Go to folder
Show File Info
3.
4.
OK
Cancel
OK
Cancel

Adjust Date and Time of Selected Items

○ Change to a specified date and time
○ Change to match file's date and time
○ Shift to new starting date and time
● Shift by set number of hours (time zone adjust)

Time Zone Adjust

● Ahead
○ Back
1 Hours

The date of an image file can be changed in Photoshop Elements by editing the metadata. Here's how:

Step one: Select the files with dates you want to change in the Organizer.

Step two: Right-click the images, and from the pop-out menu, choose **Adjust Date and Time of Selected Items**....

Step three: In the **Adjust Date and Time of Selected Items** dialog panel that opens, select the fourth option: **Shift by set number of hours (time zone adjust)**.

Step four: In the **Time Zone Adjust** panel that opens, set the time difference based on the **Ahead** or **Back** options.

Now, you should be able to find those glorious sunset shots you took from that Hawaiian beach rather than pictures of relatives waving you off at the airport the day before you arrived!

Reinstating your catalog

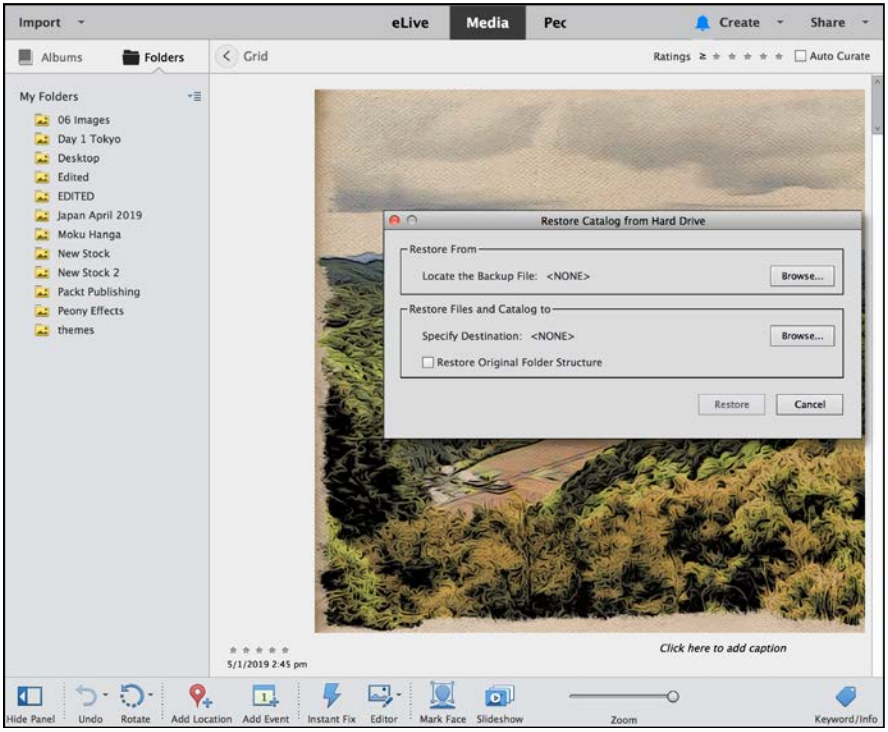
The catalog (or catalogs) is saved to a computer's hard drive by default, although it can be saved to any drive, even a removable one.

Catalogs should be **backed up** on a regular basis (use the **Organizer | File | Backup Catalog** command to do this), preferably to a removable drive or even to the cloud. Never back up to the same drive that you use to run Elements from because that wouldn't really be a true backup. Always back your catalogs up to a different drive.

I know the prospect of backing up is boring, but trust me, you only have to lose everything once – whether to a mechanical or electronic failure, or even a virus – to fully appreciate how important the simple process of backing up can be.

So, how do we reinstate a catalog if we suffer data loss? The first thing is to make sure that the computer is 100% virus- and problem-free. There is no point in risking the loss of your data a second time if the computer is not fixed.

Plug in the drive containing the backed-up copy, start the **Organizer**, and select **File**>**Restore Catalog**. This will present you with two fields: first, find where the backup is located, navigate to the location where you want it reinstated, then click **Restore**.


Import
eLive
Media
Pec
Create
Share
Albums
Folders
Grid
Ratings ≥ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
☐ Auto Curate
My Folders
06 Images
Day 1 Tokyo
Desktop
Edited
EDITED
Japan April 2019
Moku Hanga
New Stock
New Stock 2
Packt Publishing
Peony Effects
themes
Restore Catalog from Hard Drive
Restore From
Browse...
Restore Files and Catalog to
Browse...
Restore
Cancel
Click here to add caption
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
5/1/2019 2:45 pm
Hide Panel
Undo
Rotate
Add Location
Add Event
Instant Fix
Editor
Mark Face
Slideshow
Zoom
Keyword/Info

Locate the Backup File: <NONE>

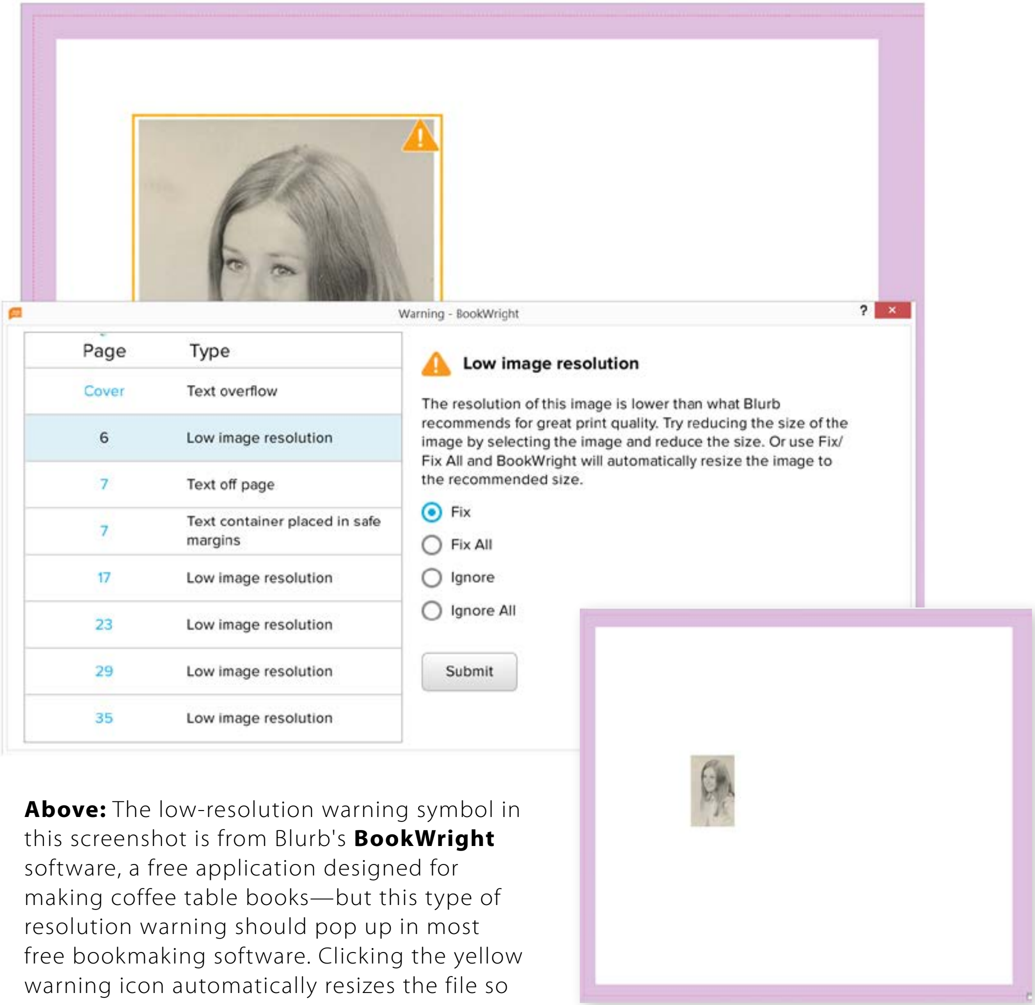
Specify Destination: <NONE>

☐ Restore Original Folder Structure

If you just want the catalog restored to where it was initially installed by default, select the **Restore Original Folder Structure** checkbox.

Resolution issues: adding pixels

Occasionally, you might have to deal with pictures that don't have a high enough resolution for the task you have in mind. For example, let's say you are preparing a family photo album but soon discover that some of the older photos that were scanned from the originals are too small; the images can't be enlarged past the size of a matchbox without them appearing soft and fuzzy.



Page	Type
Cover	Text overflow
6	Low image resolution
7	Text off page
7	Text container placed in safe margins
17	Low image resolution
23	Low image resolution
29	Low image resolution
35	Low image resolution

Low image resolution

The resolution of this image is lower than what Blurb recommends for great print quality. Try reducing the size of the image by selecting the image and reduce the size. Or use Fix/Fix All and BookWright will automatically resize the image to the recommended size.

● Fix
○ Fix All
○ Ignore
○ Ignore All

Above: The low-resolution warning symbol in this screenshot is from Blurb's **BookWright** software, a free application designed for making coffee table books—but this type of resolution warning should pop up in most free bookmaking software. Clicking the yellow warning icon automatically resizes the file so it displays at the correct size for the number of pixels in the file. The resolution for print is 300 dpi. In this example, my scanned file is on par with the size of a postage stamp (inset) – not the size I'd envisaged for my book. It needs to have additional pixels before it can be printed larger, which should also stop that annoying warning sign in the book's software from popping up.

Much of the free software available for producing digital book products has in-built warning symbols that appear as soon as you over-enlarge an image on a page. These warnings are there mostly to protect the company from complaints that the images being used are low-resolution. You could, of course, still complain, but the proof for the book company is in the low-resolution **warnings** that appear in the original book file.

Luckily, Photoshop Elements has an amazing feature called **resampling**, which allows you to add or subtract pixels to and from image files that need resizing. Before you jump with joy, however, note that the quality of a resampled file is directly determined by the quality of the original file, so if it starts off really small, you can only increase its size by a few percentage points before affecting the quality. If the original image is of good quality (over 10 MB, for example), you can probably double or even treble its size and still produce a clear, sharp-looking result.

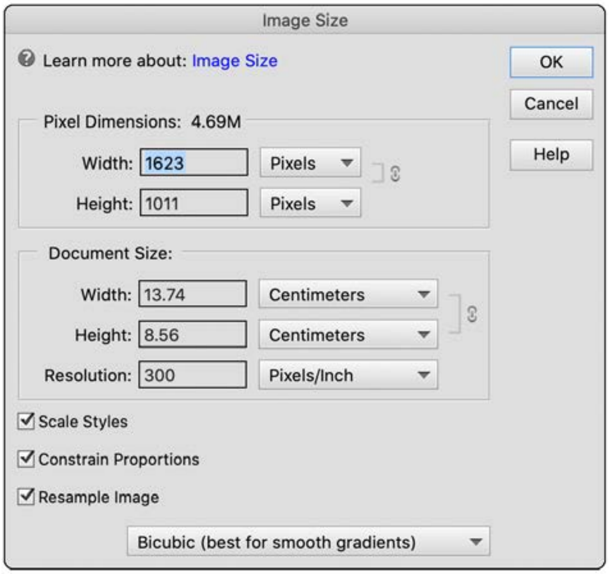


Image Size

Learn more about: Image Size

Pixel Dimensions: 4.69M

Width: 1623 Pixels

Height: 1011 Pixels

Document Size:

Width: 13.74 Centimeters

Height: 8.56 Centimeters

Resolution: 300 Pixels/Inch

☑ Scale Styles

☑ Constrain Proportions

☑ Resample Image

Bicubic (best for smooth gradients)

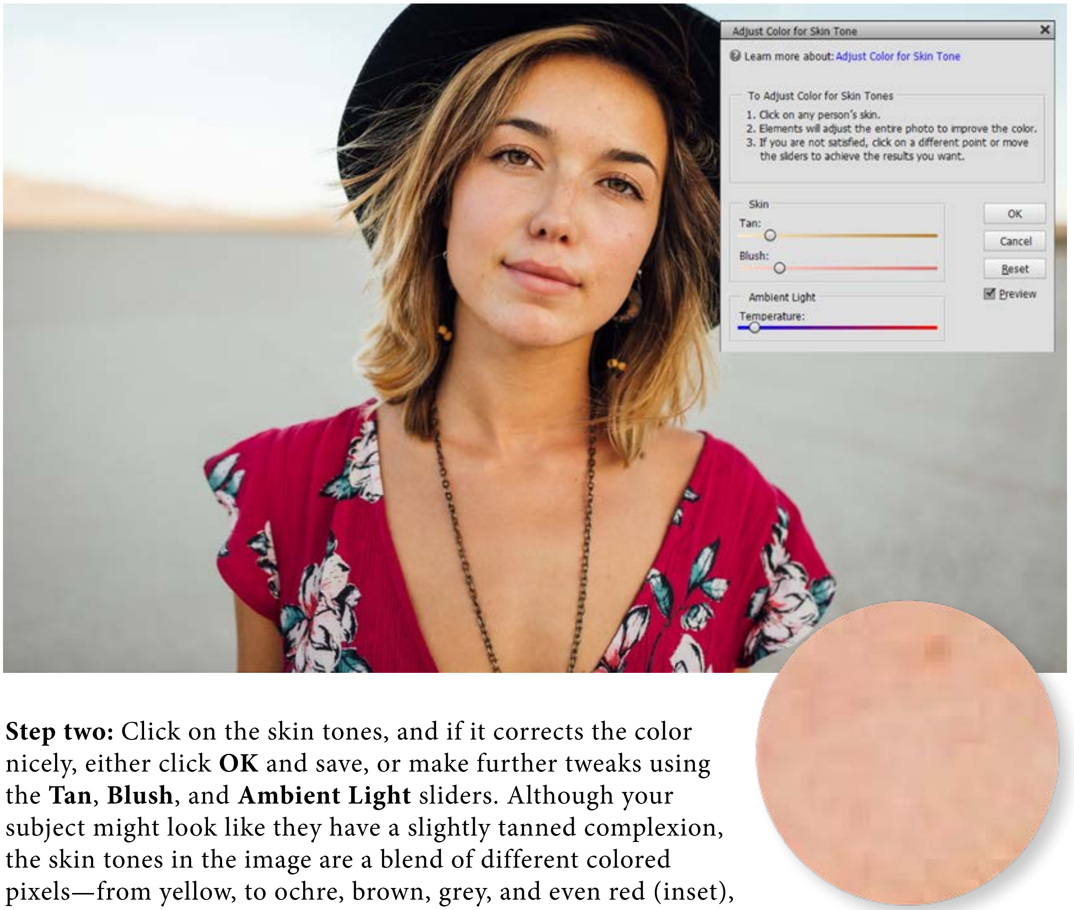
Resample the file: Although you can enter almost any enlargement figure, results are not always guaranteed. In this example, I checked the **Resample Image** checkbox at the bottom of the **Image Size** dialog panel (**Image>Resize>Image Size**), then added what I thought was a more appropriate pixel width for the book. Note that this updates the file size, which gives you a good idea of whether the image will be big enough for the page in question. In this example, the image changed from 400 pixels to 1,600 pixels wide, which was enough to boost the overall file size from 0.75 MB to 4.6 MB.

Because a large percentage of new pixels were added to a low-resolution original, the resulting file doesn't look entirely sharp, but it's a better result than having to reduce the file to the size of a postage stamp. Note that you can also sharpen the file to compensate for any softness introduced by the resampling process.

Adjust Color for Skin Tone

Getting the skin tones in a portrait 100% correct is always tricky. Factors such as memory (the photographer's), computer monitor calibration, and printer calibration can all play a role in not producing the best result. The **Adjust Color for Skin Tone** tool can help you produce the best color—and what's more, it's simple and fast to use.

Step one: Choose the **Adjust Color for Skin Tone** tool (**Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Color for Skin Tone**) and follow the on-panel instructions. It's simple to use.


Adjust Color for Skin Tone
Learn more about: Adjust Color for Skin Tone
To Adjust Color for Skin Tones
Skin
Tan:
Blush:
Ambient Light
Temperature:
OK
Cancel
Reset
☑ Preview

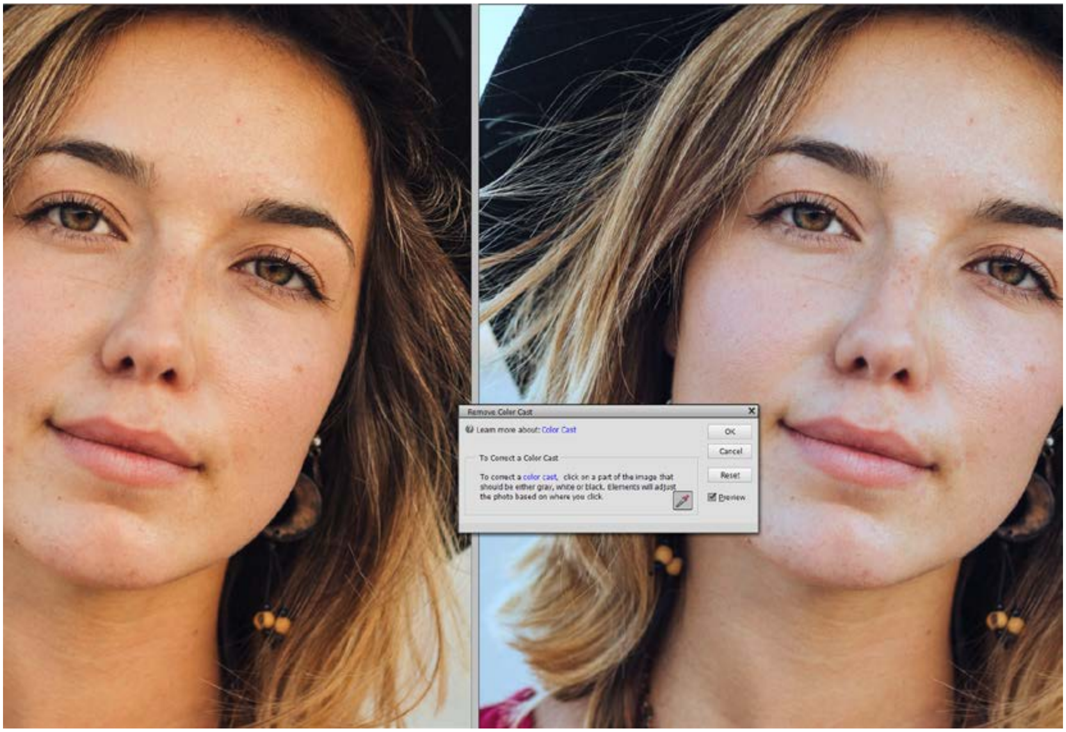
1. Click on any person's skin.
2. Elements will adjust the entire photo to improve the color.
3. If you are not satisfied, click on a different point or move the sliders to achieve the results you want.

Step two: Click on the skin tones, and if it corrects the color nicely, either click **OK** and save, or make further tweaks using the **Tan**, **Blush**, and **Ambient Light** sliders. Although your subject might look like they have a slightly tanned complexion, the skin tones in the image are a blend of different colored pixels—from yellow, to ochre, brown, grey, and even red (inset), with a specific but complex distribution so one random *click* might hit on the wrong-colored pixel and give a disappointing result. Persevere!

As with most aspects of image editing, adjustments to tone and color values can be wasted if your computer monitor is not correctly calibrated. If the screen is not displaying accurate color, then you'll risk poor results once the image is output to another device such as a printer (see *Chapter 2*, *Setting Up Photoshop Elements from Scratch*, in the *Color Management Options* and *Screen Calibration* sections).

Remove Color Cast

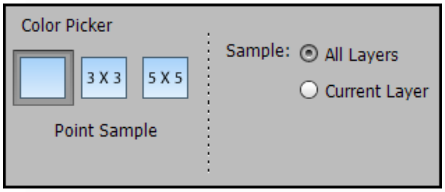
You could also use the **Remove Color Cast** tool to achieve a similar skin color improvement —although this feature is not quite as flexible as it lacks those **Tan**, **Blush**, and **Ambient Light** sliders.



To Correct a Color Cast

To correct a color cast, click on a part of the image that should be either gray, white or black. Elements will adjust the photo based on where you click.

Essentially, any tool designed to adjust the color by taking a sample from the image itself is based on the **White Balance** feature, which you'll find scattered about the application in one form or other.



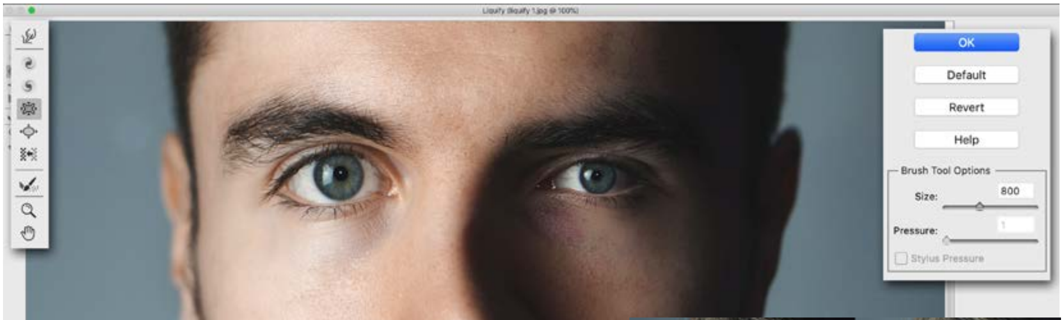
Sample: ● All Layers ○ Current Layer

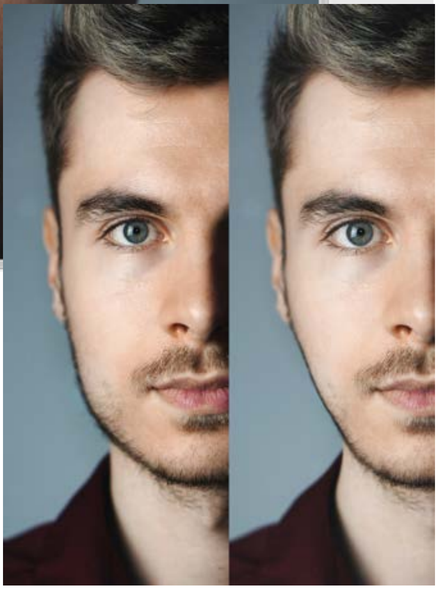
Tip:

Because we are making a reasonably inaccurate sample by clicking in the image, the information that Elements receives might not be accurate enough to allow it to work properly. To average your sampling, consider changing the **Point Sample** method from a single point to an average 3 x 3 sample or 5 x 5 sample in the **Color Picker options** panel and you might get a more accurate sample (and therefore a more realistic) result.

The Liquify filter

Fashion photographers, wedding photographers—anyone photographing people for a living – will love this filter. **Liquify** turns your digital file into a malleable, liquid pool of pixels that can be pushed around as if they were wet oil paints. Its original purpose was to change the physical attributes of models—thinning faces, fixing broken noses, and enlarging eyes. While the fantastic **Adjust Facial Features** tool (under the **Enhance** menu) does a terrific job, **Liquify** offers far greater control over the entire image, whether it's a face or full body.





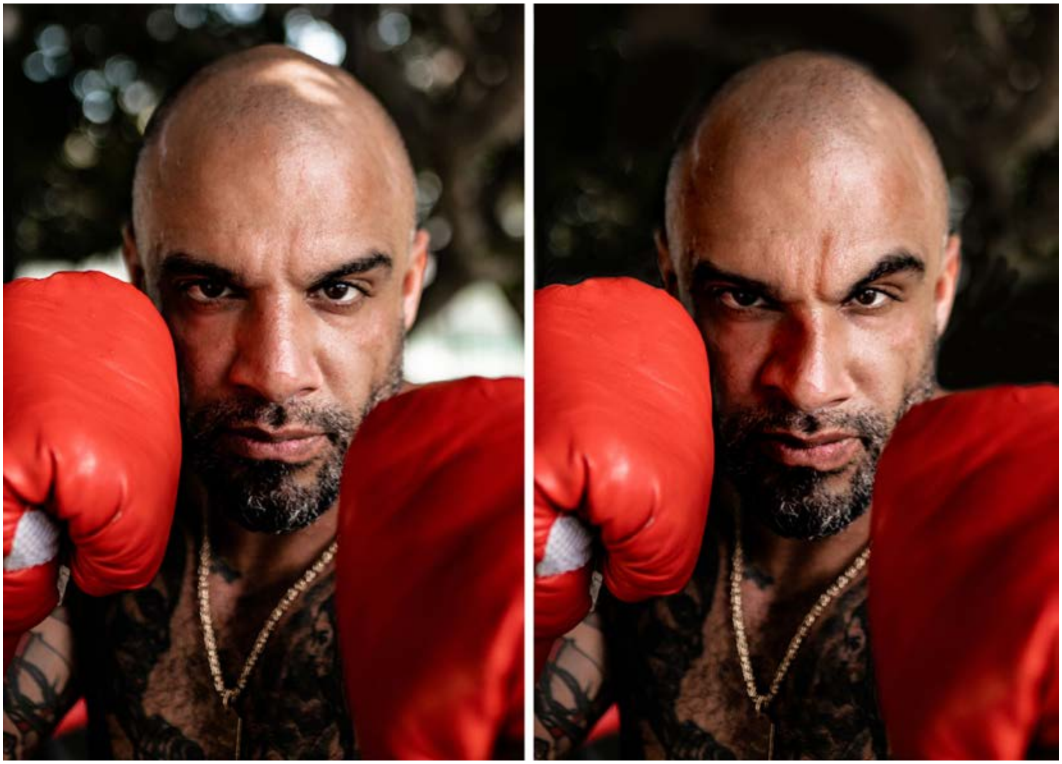
Above: In this quick example, I thinned out this man's face using the **Shift Pixels** tool and made his eyes slightly larger using the **Bloat** tool. Nothing too dramatic, but enough to make his face appear slightly thinner.

Of course this filter can also be used by regular family photographers to wreak mayhem in family snaps. Here's what you can do with this filter:

- Make noses smaller/larger
- Change the shape of ears, chins, stomachs, thighs, and waists
- Change expressions
- Bend reality

Its tool bar (above left) includes:

- **Warp tool**: This is very much like the **Smudge** brush—but better
- **Twirl Clockwise**: Rotates pixels clockwise as you hold down the mouse button or drag.



Meaner or leaner? The boxer was a slightly different challenge for Liquify—in this example, I wanted to make him appear a little more menacing so bent his nose, lowered the brows, and raised the eyebrows, particularly on the right-hand side.

- **Twirl Counter Clockwise** - Rotates pixels counterclockwise as you hold down the mouse button or drag.
- **Pucker** - Moves pixels toward the center of the brush area as you hold down the mouse button or drag.
- **Bloat** - Moves pixels away from the center of the brush area as you hold down the mouse button or drag.
- **Shift Pixels** - Moves pixels perpendicularly to the stroke direction. Drag to move pixels to the left, and *Alt*-drag (*Option*-drag in Mac OS) to move pixels to the right.
- **Reconstruct** - Fully or partially reverses the changes you've made.

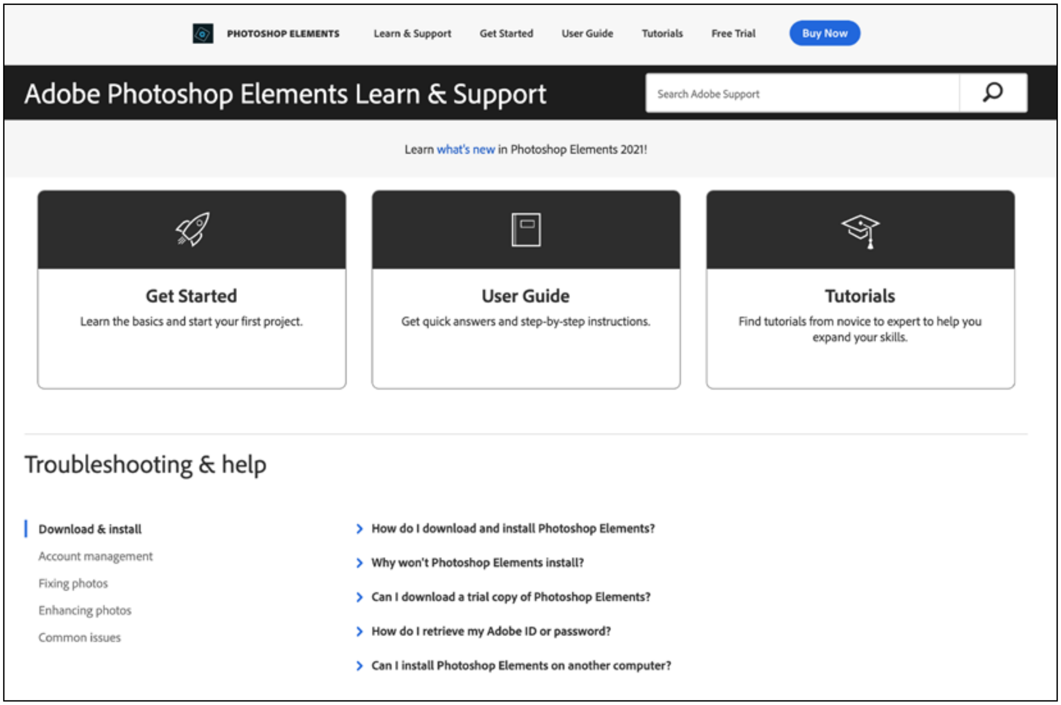
(You will find this impressive filter under **Expert>Filter>Distort>Liquify**.)

Using the Help Menu

Under the **Help** menu, you'll find a number of areas of interest, including the following:

- **Photoshop Elements Help**
- **Getting Started**
- **Key Concepts**
- **Support**
- **Video Tutorials**
- **Forum**

The following screenshots give you a brief idea of the backup Adobe provides for its ever-growing following:


PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS
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Adobe Photoshop Elements Learn & Support

Learn what's new in Photoshop Elements 2021!

Get Started

Learn the basics and start your first project.

User Guide

Get quick answers and step-by-step instructions.

Tutorials

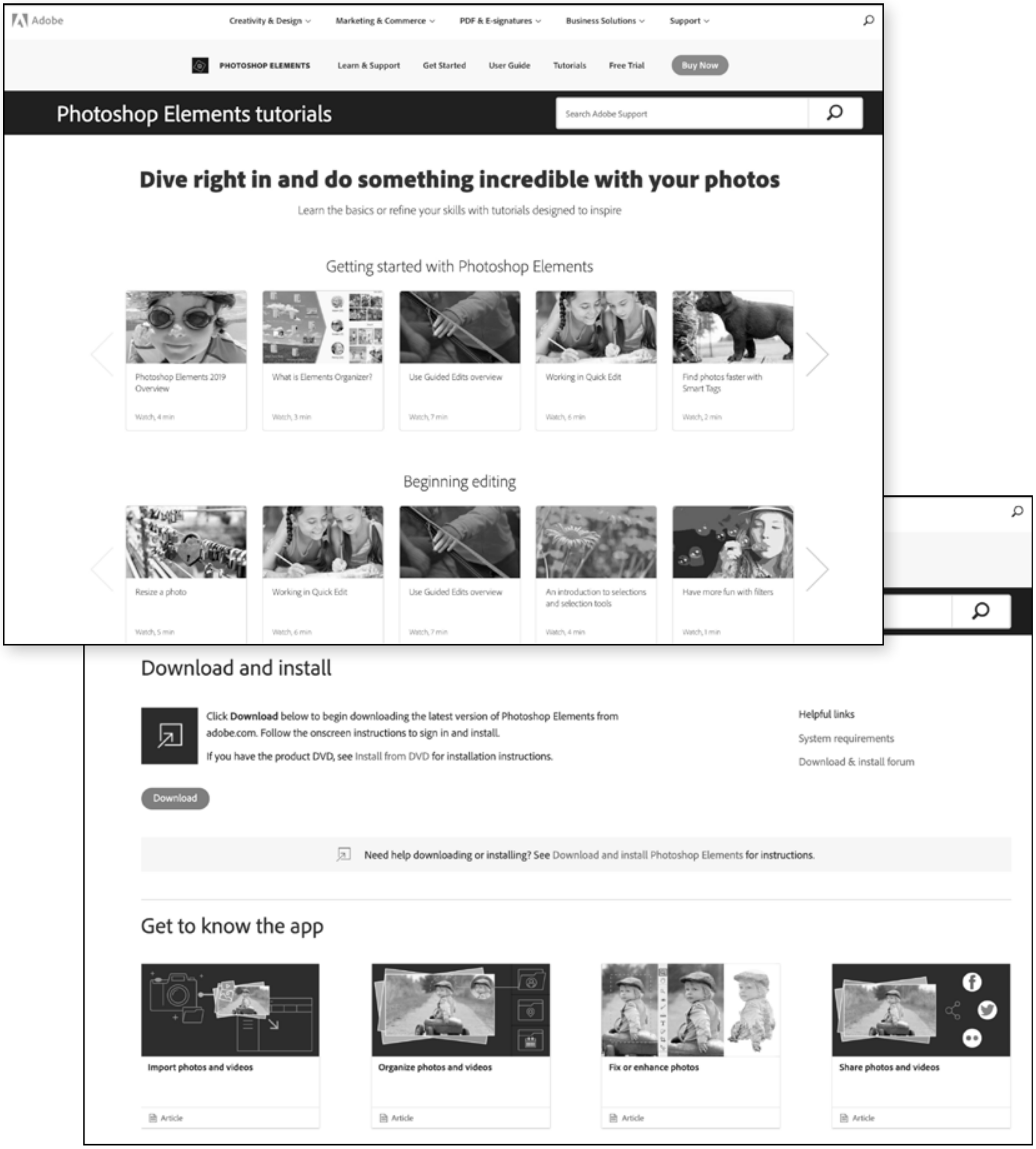
Find tutorials from novice to expert to help you expand your skills.

Troubleshooting & help

- **Download & install**
- Account management
- Fixing photos
- Enhancing photos
- Common issues

- How do I download and install Photoshop Elements?
- Why won't Photoshop Elements install?
- Can I download a trial copy of Photoshop Elements?
- How do I retrieve my Adobe ID or password?
- Can I install Photoshop Elements on another computer?

As you can see, Elements directs its users to an amazing array of instructional videos. They might not specifically address your exact requirement, but they do provide a great starting point for anyone who needs help with their editing:



Adobe
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PDF & E-signatures
Business Solutions
Support
PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS
Learn & Support
Get Started
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Photoshop Elements tutorials

Dive right in and do something incredible with your photos

Learn the basics or refine your skills with tutorials designed to inspire

Getting started with Photoshop Elements

Photoshop Elements 2019 Overview
Watch, 4 min
What is Elements Organizer?
Watch, 3 min
Use Guided Edits overview
Watch, 7 min
Working in Quick Edit
Watch, 6 min
Find photos faster with Smart Tags
Watch, 2 min

Beginning editing

Resize a photo
Watch, 5 min
Working in Quick Edit
Watch, 6 min
Use Guided Edits overview
Watch, 7 min
An introduction to selections and selection tools
Watch, 4 min
Have more fun with filters
Watch, 1 min

Download and install

Click **Download** below to begin downloading the latest version of Photoshop Elements from adobe.com. Follow the onscreen instructions to sign in and install.

If you have the product DVD, see Install from DVD for installation instructions.

Helpful links
System requirements
Download & install forum
Download

Need help downloading or installing? See Download and install Photoshop Elements for instructions.

Get to know the app

Import photos and videos
Article
Organize photos and videos
Article
Fix or enhance photos
Article
Share photos and videos
Article

Summary

I trust that this penultimate chapter has helped you iron out any residual questions you might have about the features found in Adobe Photoshop Elements. This chapter has covered most of the basic and commonly encountered problems in the program. Speaking from experience, you'll find that any problems you come across derive from either your computer operating software or mistakes that were made while shooting, rather than a failure of Elements. Now in its sixteenth version, and continually improving and upgrading, Elements provides a very stable platform on which to work.

In the next chapter, we will summarize Elements' common features: all of its tools, panels, filters, menus, and project opportunity features.

The upcoming chapter will also act as an important **reference point** for you to visit if you ever need a little more information on certain tools and functions you may be unfamiliar with.

Feature Appendix

This appendix features a summary description of every **important tool**, **panel**, and **feature** to be found in this amazing photo editing program. There's also a comprehensive overview of all the major menus along with the items that you'll find displayed there.

Bear in mind that not everything you find in this application is 100% perfect, so I have also endeavoured to add my personal thoughts on the usefulness of some of the tools and features to prevent novices from wasting time by choosing inappropriate tools or the wrong tools for the job. Though this chapter is by no means comprehensive (that would require another book), it's designed to shed additional light on the workings of this multifarious editing application.

Treat it like a **quick reference section**. If you are trying to achieve a specific effect, look, or result, use these pages to provide inspiration and the right tool or process for the job at hand.

As a quick reference, here's a brief listing of the topics covered in this appendix:

Home Screen

Organizer: Import button

Organizer: The five view spaces

Quick Edit mode: Tool bar

Quick Edit: Adjustments

Guided Edit mode:
Basics, Color, Black and White, Fun Edits, Special Edits, and Photomerge

Expert Edit mode:
Tool bar (including: View, Select, Enhance, Drawing, Modify, and Color tools)

Drop-down menus:
File, Edit, Image, Enhance, Layer, Select, Filter, View, Window, and Help

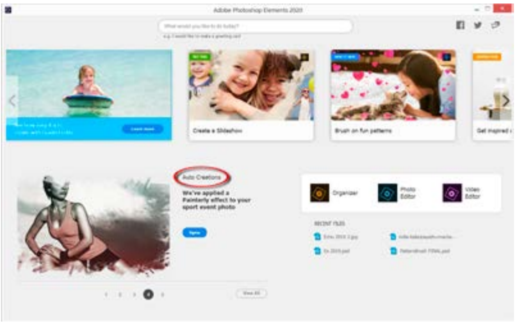
The Panels:
Layers, Effects, Filters, Styles, Graphics, Actions, Color Swatches, Histogram, History, Favorites, Navigator, and Info

Create menu:
Slideshow, Photo Collage, Photo Prints, Quote Graphic, Photo Book, Greeting Card, Photo Calendar, Instant Movie, Video Story, Video Collage, and DVD projects

Share menu: Email, Twitter, Flickr, Vimeo and YouTube, Burn Video to DVD, and PDF Slideshow

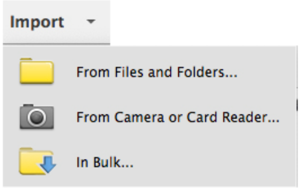
Home Screen

Start by double-clicking on the Elements icon on your Windows or Mac to open the Home Screen.



This screen acts a gateway into the various parts of Elements itself. Firstly it provides creative inspiration by offering examples of its features through Auto Creations, a clever AI-driven feature that presents examples of its features using your own images automatically selected from the Organizer. This includes slideshows, **Pattern Brush**, **Painterly**, **B&W Selection**, **Depth of Focus** effects, collages, special text effects, and more. The Home Screen also features web inspiration links, a list of previously viewed files, and three shortcuts to open the **Organizer**, **Editor**, or **Video Editor**.

Organizer – Import



This big button, at the top left of the **Organizer** window, is pretty much where it all starts. Use this to bring images into the Photoshop Elements database (called the **catalog**). Note: Elements never actually copies the original files into the program—it just imports thumbnails and metadata—while forming links to the original files.

There are several ways to do this: **Import from Files and Folders**, from **Camera or Card Reader**, from **Scanner**, or **In Bulk**. (You can also import files using the **File>Get Photos and Videos** command.)

Organizer – its five view spaces

Media: This is the central window in which you see all of your photos, music, video, and graphics files stored in the catalog. Use it as a base—but further sort and categorize your images by placing them into **Albums**.

Media
People
Places
Events

People: If you decide to analyze your image database, Elements can file your photos based on the people it identifies in each image. It's a clever feature that seems to work well.

Places: An internet-reliant viewing mode that's geared toward photographers with GPS-enabled cameras. Images appear on a Google world map according to the coordinates sourced from the file's metadata. This is a nice feature for anyone embarking on a road trip, or perhaps researching travel. This feature is not supported by versions older than Elements 2020.

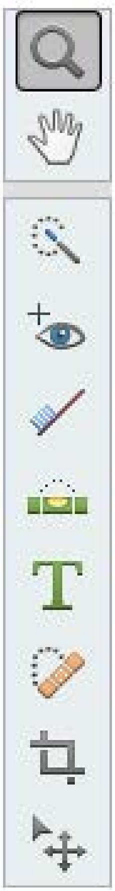
Events: Use **Events** to group your images based on the date. This is handy if you need quick access to files that were shot at specific times. If they are travel snaps taken in a different time zone, remember to change the date in each file to make searching more accurate.

Albums: Albums can be created inside the general media area to hold specific groups of images. They are an effective way to further sub-divide your files into more manageable quantities—rather than having everything display together in the one **Media** window.

Folders: The folder view displays the computer's folder hierarchy. Only those folders that feature already-imported images appear in this display.

Auto Curate (checkbox, top right of the main screen): Turn this on to see what Elements regards as the top 50–500 *best* images (you select from how many). Good luck with that!

Keyword/Info: An essential panel in the Organizer as it displays the basic metadata for each file, along with the history (that is, the edits). The **Tag** part on the same tab displays any keywords or tags that have been attached using Elements or indeed, other applications.



Quick Edit mode: Tool bar

This tool bar shares many common features that are also found in Expert Edit mode, including Zoom, Hand, Quick Selection, Red Eye, Straighten, Type, Spot Healing, Crop, and Move. One that is unique to this tool rack is the curious **Whiten Teeth** tool.

Whiten Teeth (*F*):
This tool produces a *select and brighten* effect. If you click and drag across teeth, or anything else that might need a bit of brightening, it selects the area (based on edge contrast) while adding a brightness boost. This isn't a good substitute for regular visits to your dentist.

Tip: The letters in brackets, for example, (*Z*), denote the **keyboard shortcut** letter for that tool, or group of tools.

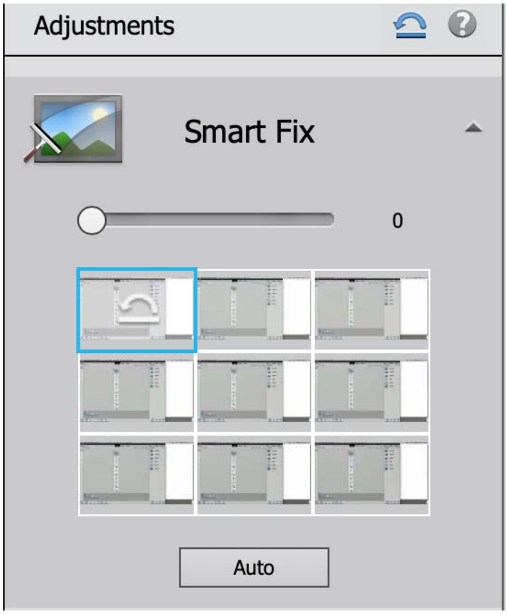
Quick Edit: Adjustments

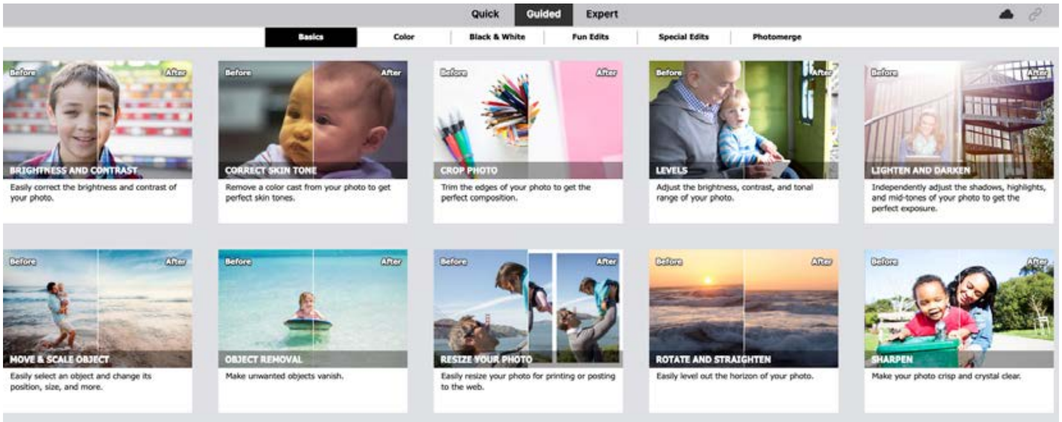
On the right-hand side of the **Quick Edit** space, you'll find this handy tone fixing utility.

It features the **Smart Fix (pictured)**, **Exposure**, **Lighting**, **Color**, **Balance**, and **Sharpen** tools, all of which can be adjusted using a slider or by clicking on one of the nine thumbnails under each sub-header. It's easy to use and produces good results.

Every tool in this application has its own **unique settings** that can be used to modify that specific tool's efficiency. If you find that the tool you are working with doesn't work as effectively as you had hoped it would, simply open the corresponding **Options** panel at the bottom of the screen and adjust the settings to make it work more effectively.

(The small semi-circular arrow icon at the top of this, and most other Elements processes, is for resetting the image back to its original state. The **?** icon takes you to Adobe's online community Help section.)





BRIGHTNESS AND CONTRAST
Easily correct the brightness and contrast of your photo.

CORRECT SKIN TONE
Remove a color cast from your photo to get perfect skin tones.

CROP PHOTO
Trim the edges of your photo to get the perfect composition.

LEVELS
Adjust the brightness, contrast, and tonal range of your photo.

LIGHTEN AND DARKEN
Independently adjust the shadows, highlights, and mid-tones of your photo to get the perfect exposure.

MOVE & SCALE OBJECT
Easily select an object and change its position, size, and more.

OBJECT REMOVAL
Make unwanted objects vanish.

RESIZE YOUR PHOTO
Easily resize your photo for printing or posting to the web.

ROTATE AND STRAIGHTEN
Easily level out the horizon of your photo.

SHARPEN
Make your photo crisp and crystal clear.

Guided Edit mode

The Guided Edit mode offers 53 step-by-step editing processes—from a basic color fix, to far more sophisticated processes, such as **panorama stitching**, **tilt-shift**, and **watercolor** effects. It's a neat feature that works very well—plus it's a good place to look for image editing **inspiration**. This excellent edit space is subdivided into the following subsections:

Basics

Brightness and Contrast: This has got to be the most useful edit for most digital photos. (Also in **Expert>Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Brightness and Contrast**.) Adding a bit of brightness and contrast might be all that's needed to significantly improve the visual strength of the picture.

Correct Skin Tone: Fixes color casts and inconsistencies. Also in **Expert>Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Color for Skin Tone**.

Crop Photo: Trim bits off the image to remove distractions and improve the composition.

Levels: Easy-to-use and powerful contrast and brightness adjustment tool—an essential feature. Also in **Expert>Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Levels**.

Lighten and Darken: A simple feature, though in my opinion, it's not as effective as **Levels**.

Move and Scale Object: A new feature in Elements 2021 with an auto select, copy, retouch, and paste function that works effectively. This is a logical development of the next feature, **Object Removal**.

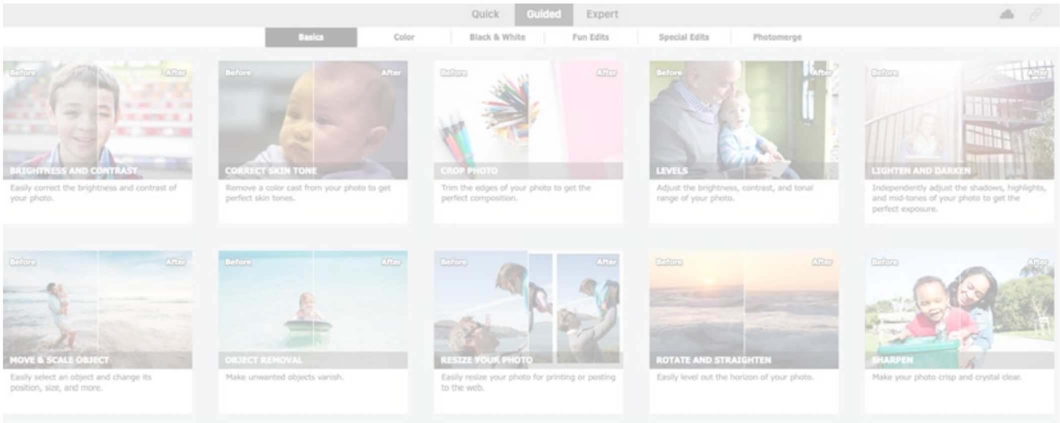
Object Removal: A very impressive feature that automatically removes objects from a scene using Adobe AI and the **Healing Brush** tool. All you have to do is draw roughly around the offending item and it disappears as if by magic.

Resize Your Photo: A quick way to resize any image file.

Rotate and Straighten: A basic, self-explanatory function for leveling off images.

Sharpen: A simple process designed to add clarity, especially if the image is to be printed.

Vignette Effect: Adds a darker edge around the image to emphasize a central subject.



Easily correct the brightness and contrast of your photo.

Remove a color cast from your photo to get perfect skin tones.

Trim the edges of your photo to get the perfect composition.

Adjust the brightness, contrast, and tonal range of your photo.

Independently adjust the shadows, highlights, and mid-tones of your photo to get the perfect exposure.

Easily select an object and change its position, size, and more.

Make unwanted objects vanish.

Easily resize your photo for printing or posting to the web.

Easily level out the horizon of your photo.

Make your photo crisp and crystal clear.

Color

Enhance Color: Uses the powerful **Hue/Saturation** feature to boost color. Essential.

Lomo Camera Effect: Creates a cool high-contrast "look," and a heavy vignette effect. A nice effect.

Remove a Color Cast: Good for correcting unpredictable or weird color.

Saturated Film Effect: A simple, one-click color booster. Easy to use, and effective.

Black and White

Black and White: Simply converts a color shot to black and white. Also try the **Convert to Black and White** feature in the **Enhance** menu.

B&W Color Pop: The same as above but it retains a single color, which you choose, as a special effect. Produces strong visual results without requiring much previous experience.

B&W Selection: The same as above, but in this version, you select an area of color to retain (could be single or multiple colors).

High Key: Great, graphic result.

Line Drawing: As above, producing a distinctive graphic-looking visual effect.

Low Key: Good for dark, extra-moody shots.

Fun Edits

Double Exposure: Blend one picture into another for a neat 60s look.

Duotone Effect: A new effect that creates a two-color look in any image. It's been in Photoshop CC for decades but this new version is easier to use and very effective for making creative monocolor looks.

Effects Collage: A simple but effective way to split an image into "parts," such as a diptich (two panels) or triptych (three panels), each with a different visual effect applied to them. Easy to use as everything is automated and clever.

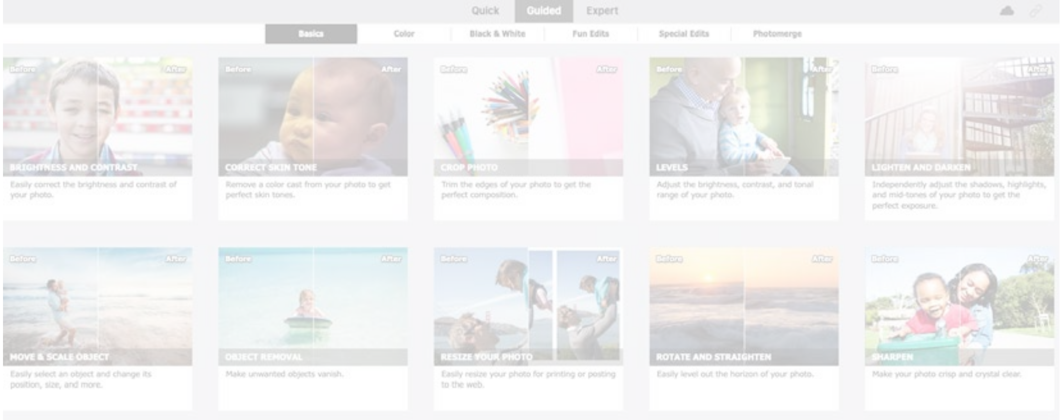
Meme Maker: An easy way to create a neat graphic for Instagram or Facebook.

Multi-Photo Text: The same as the **Photo Text** effect, except this edit uses a different image for each letter of the effect. You need to have a range of different images ready so one can go into each separate letter in the design.

Old Fashioned Photo: Combines a graphic photo effect with a sepia toning "look," as well as some texture overlays.

Out of Bounds: A 3D effect that looks cool - but you'll find that it only works with selected subjects in very specific images.

Painterly: Add rough brushstroke effects to any image file. Especially good if you print the image onto watercolor or textured inkjet paper.



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ROTATE AND STRAIGHTEN
Easily level out the horizon of your photo.

SHARPEN
Make your photo crisp and crystal clear.

Partial Sketch: Converts the photo into a graphic, monochromatic line drawing, with some of the original color showing through the layer. Very illustrative.

Pattern Brush: A new feature that automatically selects the main subject in the frame then adds a graphic pattern to the background and, amazingly, behind the subject. Effective.

Photo Text: Fill text with any image for a bold, graphic look. Works best with bold, extra bold, or very heavy, wide fonts.

Picture Stack: Produces a nice "stack o' prints" look to any collection of images. An AI-driven feature that produces a strong visual result in seconds. A real time-saver.

Pop Art: Remember Campbells soup tins and Marilyn Monroe posters from the 60s? This produces a similar Andy Warhol-type screen print and posterization effect. Nice.

Puzzle Effect: Splits an image into a jigsaw "look" using a simple graphic overlay.

Reflection: This effect is designed to appear as if the lower part of the frame is water or glass, into which the top part of the image is reflected. Does not work on all images.

Shape Overlay Effect: A fun feature using the **Cookie Cutter** tool. Use this to add a bit of a scrapbooking design feel to your projects.

Speed Effect: Adds a sense of movement using a **Motion Blur** filter.

Speed Pan: Adds a blur to the left and right, simulating the look of a panned shot.

Zoom Burst Effect: Makes it look like you zoomed into the subject with the lens at the time the shutter was pressed.

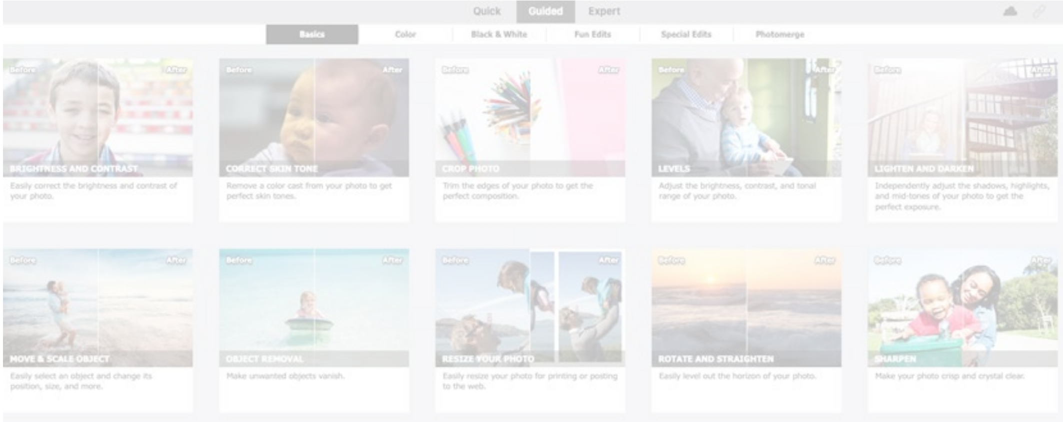
Special Edits

Depth of Field: Select part of a photo and make it blurry to create the look of selective wide-aperture, shallow-focus effects.

Frame Creator: Add a graphic frame to any picture.

Orton Effect: Adds a heavy soft-focus effect to the image. It looks a bit 70s, but nice anyway.

Perfect Landscape: A new feature that allows you to replace any sky easily, while cleaning up the landscape using the **Straighten** and **Crop** tools, plus the **Auto Haze Removal** tool and the **Spot Healing Brush** - sounds complex, but this is anything but, plus it produces robust results. You'll also find the **Auto Haze Removal** feature under the **Expert>Enhance** menu.



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Perfect Portrait: Great for flattering any portrait sitter. Easy to apply and a very useful tool.

Recompose: Uses the Photomerge engine to push and scale (user-protected) parts of an image to produce a different composition.

Replace Background: A semi-automated select and replace feature. If you don't have the best background, Elements provides a few samples. Works optimally with simple images - the more complex the image is, the harder it is for the AI to select the "right" bits.

Restore Old Photo: A bit of a powerhouse feature involving 11 different processes to make an old snap or scanned print look like it was shot yesterday.

Scratches and Blemishes: Uses the retouching **Healing** and **Spot Healing Brush** tools to refine and retouch any image to make it look professionally edited. Excellent features.

Text and Border Overlay: Adds a graphic border over your photo.

Tilt-Shift: Produces over-the-top softness in parts of the image, which in turn gives that wonderful close-up look that makes a full-size subject appear as if it's really a miniature figure. A popular feature in most video editing suites - now available here for still shooters.

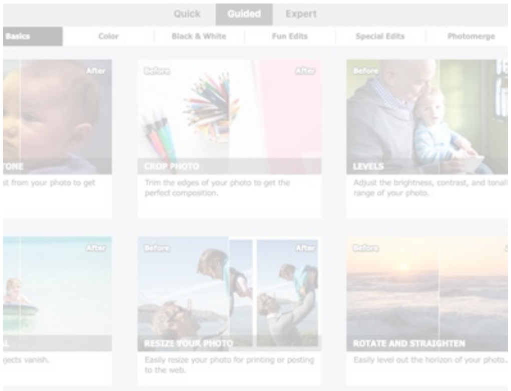
Water Color Effect: A lovely overlay filter effect used for adding a bit of extra creativity to any shot. Good to use if you go on to print the created art on watercolor inkjet paper, or similar.

Photomerge

Photomerge Compose: Use this tool to select and transfer a person or object from one picture to another. It's a simple process where you (roughly) draw a line around the subject and the software automatically selects the subject (that is, a figure), copies, pastes, and blends it from one picture to another.

Photomerge Exposure: Elements' nearest equivalent to a high dynamic range effect (HDR). Combines multiple exposures of the same shot to produce an image that contains a wider tonal value than is possible with a single snap. In this context, dedicated HDR software applications would do a far better job.

Photomerge Faces: Use like Photomerge Compose. Select one face from a picture and paste it on top of another face in a different shot. Good for group shots where not everyone is smiling in every scene, for example. But the trick is you must remember to take multiple versions of the same group so you can find suitable "replacements."



Photomerge Group Shot: The same as Photomerge Faces, but designed for groups of people.

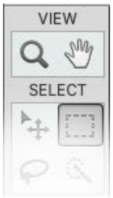
Photomerge Scene Cleaner: Shoot multiple frames of a busy scene (preferably without moving the camera), then remove some of the people by copying and pasting selected empty spaces over the populated parts of the scene. Sounds complex but it's easy to do and works remarkably well.

Photomerge Panorama: Works brilliantly by lining multiple snaps of a scene up to produce a seamless panorama. Sections of the panorama must be shot with a good 20% overlap, with the same exposure and focus point to get the best results. (Photomerge only works if you remember to shoot multiple frames in the field!)

Expert Edit mode: Tool bar

Tools on the **Tool bar** are divided into six groups, each pertinent for specific picture editing tasks: **View**, **Select**, **Enhance**, **Draw**, **Modify**, and **Color**.

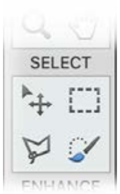
VIEW tools



Zoom tool (*Z*):
Use **Zoom** to click and enlarge your image in the main screen. Note that you can also do this by using the keyboard shortcut: *Ctrl/Cmd* + + or *Ctrl/Cmd* + -.

Hand tool (*H*): Use the hand tool to move the image around the main screen. It only works when the image is enlarged bigger than the main screen. If you are working with any other tool at the time and need to reposition your image in the main window left/right or up/down, hold the *Spacebar* and the **Hand** appears, allowing you to shift the image. When the *Spacebar* is released, the tool you were originally using reappears.

SELECT tools



Move tool (*V*):
Perhaps the most useful tool in Photoshop Elements. Use it to click, hold, and reposition images, objects, or text in multi-layered files.

Rectilinear Marquee tool (*M*): Used for making quick rectangular or square selections. Once drawn, only the pixels inside that selection can be altered. Those outside the selection are protected. To cancel a selection, choose **Select**>**Deselect** or *Ctrl/Cmd + D*. To draw a perfect square, hold the *Shift* key while clicking and dragging in the image. To move the already made selection, click immediately inside the marquee (the selection line) and drag it to reposition the *live* selection. Also use this tool to crop an image - by drawing the rectangular marquee first then choosing **Image**>**Crop**.

Elliptical Marquee tool (*M*):
Make non-rectilinear selections - typically ellipses or circular selections. Holding the *Shift* key while drawing a selection locks the tool into drawing a perfect circle.

Lasso tool (*L*):
The Lasso tool is exactly that: click, then drag the cursor to draw a line around any subject. As it's a freehand operation, accuracy is quite hard to maintain. If your editing style requires you to work with selections frequently, I would recommend purchasing a **graphics tablet**, a device that almost completely replaces the (clumsy) mouse with a pen-shaped electronic stylus - making it far easier to execute fine and accurate brush strokes.

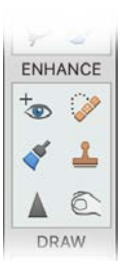
Polygonal Lasso tool (*L*):
This selection tool is particularly good for selecting geometric shapes because it operates on a **point-to-point** basis. Click once, reposition the cursor, click a second time, reposition the cursor, and click a third time, and so on until you join up at the start point. Each time you mouse-click, it pins a straight selection line to the canvas - so drawing a square selection takes just five clicks.

Magnetic Lasso tool (*L*):
This is also a freehand style selection tool—except for the fact that the selection line's *qualities* are designed like a magnet that sticks to the edges of objects - by way of its edge contrast. So, if you're selecting a black object on a white background, it will work seamlessly with little or no real draftsmanship required. As long as you follow the outline of the object roughly, it will snap to the object outline automatically for you. The *magnetic* "stickiness" of the tool can be increased/decreased depending on how defined the contrast edge in the subject is.

Magic Wand tool (*A*):
An all-time favorite for most picture editors because its selection capabilities are based on the color of the pixels clicked. Vary its effectiveness by increasing or decreasing the **Tolerance** levels so that it selects a wider, or narrower, range of the color that was initially clicked.

As with all selection tools, if you hold the *Shift* key while clicking in an image, each subsequent click *adds* to the overall selection. If you over-select something (because the **Tolerance** is set too high), you can subtract from the selection by holding the *Alt*/*Opt* key while clicking. The **Magic Wand** shares space with the excellent **Selection Brush**, **Quick Selection**, **Refine Selection**, and **Auto Selection** tools.

ENHANCE tools



Red Eye Removal tool (*Y*):
By clicking and dragging a small selection marquee (square shape) over the offending red eye, Elements *looks* for red pixels and turns them gray - essentially converting the effect to gray-eye, even if your subject has green or blue eyes. But gray eyes are far more preferable to red eyes. Note that this tool also has a check button for removing (greenish) pet eye.

Spot Healing Brush (*J*):
This is the most useful of all the retouching tools because it's easy and effective to use. Choose a brush size, move the cursor over the blemish, and click once. Elements copies the pixels from around the outside of the brush and pastes them inside, virtually covering up the blemish in the original image. It works like magic in most retouching situations, providing the blemish is not too near other strident details, such as the hairline, in which case, it might copy unwanted items such as hair into the target area. Making the brush smaller usually solves this problem.

Healing Brush (*J*):
This works just the same as the **Spot Healing** brush, except that you must first select where the 'good' pixels are coming from (the **Spot Healing** brush always takes them from around the brush shape). Delineate a source area by holding the *Alt/Opt* key and clicking in a *good* area of the image. This *tells* Photoshop Elements where you want to copy pixels from. You then shift the cursor over the area to be repaired and click a second time to paste and blend the copied pixels over the damaged pixels. This is especially useful if the source area is a long way from the area requiring repair. For larger repairs, click, hold, and move the brush freehand over a larger area, before releasing the mouse to instigate the fix. The larger the brush size, the further afield Elements looks for a good source area, which increases the possibility of copying inappropriate details, as well as good stuff. Always keep an eye on the source area while retouching.

Smart Brush tool (*F*):
A clever, AI-driven, *all-in-one* tool. The brush operates as a selection tool, detecting the edges of the object you want to transform, while automatically adding into that selection one of the visual effects available (these are chosen from the extensive menu: lighting, nature, portrait, tints, black and white, special effects, and many more). Success relies on your object having a defined edge that the selection tool can identify. If it goes over the bounds of the image, you can modify the selection by painting in reverse mode, or fine-tune the effect using the **Refine Edge** feature, located in the tool's **Options** panel.

Detail Smart Brush tool (*F*):
The cousin to the **Smart Brush** - it relies on your painting and drawing skills to refine the AI selection process. I find this tool hard to use. Again, a graphics tablet would make this a lot easier to use.

Clone Stamp tool (*S*):
The **Healing Brushes** blend color and tone from the 'source' into the "target area." **Clone Stamp** does not blend - what you see is what is copied - although you can adjust the opacity of the sample process. If you need to repair some lighter-colored pixels, for example, it's important to find some equally light-colored *good* pixels to use as your source area, otherwise the transfer of pixels in the copy and paste operation will be visible. Use this tool, with the **Opacity** set to a very low number, to copy and paste good pixels over the bad pixels in very transparent layers. It takes considerably longer doing this, but it's also easier to cover your (retouching) tracks, and can give you a more professional-looking result.

Pattern Stamp tool (*S*):
This is similar to the **Clone Stamp** tool, but instead of copying and pasting pixels from the same or even a different image, this tool applies textures. I think it has limited application in photography, but I can see it being an asset for designers and web builders.

Blur tool (*R*):
As its name suggests, use this brush-based tool to add softness to critical areas of your images. This tool is useful for blurring small areas, but works slowly if you try and apply it to a large area with a big brush on a high-resolution image file. For bigger jobs, I'd use a selection and one of the blur filters.

Sharpen Brush (*R*):
This works in the opposite direction to the **Blur** brush in that you can paint in some sharpness to small brush-sized areas of a picture. It's useful for fine-tuning portraits, for example, but it's easy to go too far with this - doing so produces a jarring, pixellated look. Use with care.

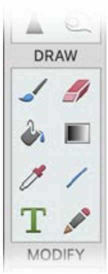
Smudge tool (*R*):
This effects brush allows you to push pixels around as if they were made of wet paint. It works well, but if the image file is low-resolution, manipulating the pixels makes the image appear defocused and blurry—the higher the resolution in the original file, the better the results. A more effective alternative might be to use the **Liquify filter**.

Dodge tool (*O*):
This (along with the **Burn** and **Sponge** tools) is one of the *unsung heroes* of the image editing world because it allows you to make significant tonal changes to parts of the image without the need for complex selections or masks. It's an adjustable brush-based tool that allows you to *paint* lightness into three distinct tonal ranges: the **highlights**, **midtones**, and **shadows**. How fast this effect materializes is controlled using the tool's **Exposure** slider.

Burn tool (*O*):
This adjustable-sized brush works in the opposite direction to the **Dodge** tool. The **Burn** tool allows you to *paint in* darkness to three distinct tonal ranges: the **highlights**, **midtones**, and **shadows**. How fast this occurs is controlled using the **Exposure** slider. These tools produce the best results by choosing a low exposure setting. The slower the process goes, the less noticeable it will be in the finished product.

Sponge tool (*O*):
This brush-based tool operates by increasing or decreasing the saturation (color intensity) over which the brush passes. You can increase the color, or decrease it, to the point where it turns black and white. Note that it'll only have an effect if the original contains visible color information—it won't work, for example, if you try and increase the saturation of a sky that looks white because it has been overexposed and contains no color.

DRAW tools



Brush tool (*B*):
Not surprisingly, this (paint) **Brush** tool works just like an artist's brush. Choose a color from the **Color Picker** at the bottom of the toolbar and start painting. For the best results, use a graphics tablet.

Impressionist Brush tool (*B*):
As its name might suggest, this clever tool copies the pixels over which you brush and represents them, in one smooth action, in a blurred, impressionistic style, hence the name. You can choose from a range of impressionist brush stroke styles. Works best on images with simple content.

Color Replacement tool (*B*):
This brush-based tool allows you to choose one specific color in the image, and by choosing a second color from the color picker, you can simply replace the color that was initially picked from the picture with the new color that's been chosen from the Tool bar. Quite an effective tool.

Eraser tool (*E*):
As its name suggests, this tool is used to erase pixels from any image. It is especially useful for jobs such as cutting objects out of a background, removing bits missed by a selection, or blending images together from different layers.

Background Eraser tool (*E*):
Another type of selection tool that works on the edge contrast in the image—you set the parameters with the brush's **Size** and **Tolerance setting**. Set it up, then click and drag just away from the object you want the background removed from and it removes the background pixels while hopefully leaving the subject intact. I find this tool hard to control. You be the judge. You can work in **Contiguous** or **Discontiguous** mode. Much of its success relies on the type of image you try it out on.

Magic Eraser tool (*E*):
I suspect that this tool is based on the same pixel-grabbing design as the **Magic Wand** selection tool, except that, instead of selecting pixels, it removes pixels based on their color. You can adjust its efficiency using the **Tolerance** slider. I find this a lot easier to control than the **Background Eraser** tool.

Paint Bucket tool (*K*):
This feature has been in Photoshop Elements forever, and is used, as its name suggests, to slop *paint* (color) over the image. Like most of Photoshop Elements' tools, how far the paint spreads across the canvas (the image) is controlled using the **Tolerance** slider, the **Contiguous** check box, and the tool's **Blend Mode**. And by changing its **Opacity** value, you effectively water the paint down. I use this tool quite a lot to *throw* a color wash over an image if I want to give it an old, faded, or different emotional feel. You can also use it in conjunction with an **Adjustment Layer**, or a mask, to darken, lighten, or color select parts of an image file. It's a very handy yet under utilized feature.

Gradient tool (*G*):
This is used both as a photographic tool and for graphic design applications. Click and drag the gradient line through the image in any direction to apply it over the picture—in combination with the tool's **Blend Mode** and the **Opacity** slider. Photographers use this feature in the same way as they might a **graduated neutral density filter** that fits over the front of the lens, specifically for landscapes and for artists to re-color images. It can be especially effective with black and white files. This is another under-utilized Elements tool in my opinion.

Color Picker (*I*):
This is a tremendously useful, but nevertheless underrated, feature in Elements. Use the eyedropper (in conjunction with the **Info** panel) to sample the brightness levels in any part of your image, specifically to check the density of the shadows or highlights. Also, use this tool to sample colors from within the image and load them into the **Color Picker**.

Custom Shape tool (*U*):
This tool shares space with the **Rectangle** tool, the **Rounded Rectangle** tool, the **Elliptical** tool, the **Polygonal** tool, the **Star** tool, and the **Line** tool. All of these are **vector shapes** (so, not made from pixels) and can be applied to photographs, or used solo, as part of a design or illustration. Since they are vectors, they can be enlarged or reduced with no loss of quality. Use shapes as text boxes, or design elements. Use the **Custom Shape** tool itself to apply features such as a copyright stamp to pictures. There are 560 different shapes (yes, I counted them all) to choose from under the following sub-menus: **Animals**, **Arrows**, **Banners and Awards**, **Characters**, **Crop Shapes**, **Dress up**, **Faces**, **Flowers**, **Foliage and Trees**, **Food**, **Frames**, **Fruit**, **Music**, **Nature**, **Objects**, **Ornaments**, **Shapes**, **Signs**, **Symbols**, **Talk Bubbles**, and **Tiles**. Phew!

Horizontal Type tool (*T*):
Use this feature by clicking into the main window and typing in order to add text to a photo or blank document. Its features mirror those of a typical word processing application. Text is placed on its own individual vector text layer, which can be edited independently of the image into which it has been placed. It's a highly useful feature.

Pencil tool (*T*):
Use this in exactly the same way as you would a regular artist's H (hard) pencil (although this tool does not have the softness or shading capabilities of the real thing). Works best in conjunction with a **graphics tablet**.

MODIFY tools

MODIFY
COLOR

Crop tool (*C*):
Click, hold, and drag inside an image to draw a **crop marquee** around the bits you want to keep. Click **OK**, and the pixels outside of this marquee are deleted from the file. Use this tool to recompose a shot at the editing stage. The **Crop** tool can be used to rotate an image, as well as to crop it. It can also be used to add a **border** to an image - first by dragging the **Crop** tool to the extremities of the image, then, in a second action, pulling the edges of the **Crop Marquee** off of the image and onto the surrounding pasteboard area. When you click **OK**, that section between the edge of the image and the pasteboard becomes a color border. Choose a color from the **Color Picker** before you create the border.

Recompose tool (*W*):
A relatively new addition to Photoshop Elements, the **Recompose** tool uses the power of **Photomerge** (originally designed to stitch panoramas together) to bring separate subjects closer together or further away—in the same frame. It's somewhat tricky to use and, like many of the fully automated tools in Elements, it doesn't always produce good results because every picture is completely different from the previous one. It's worth a try though.

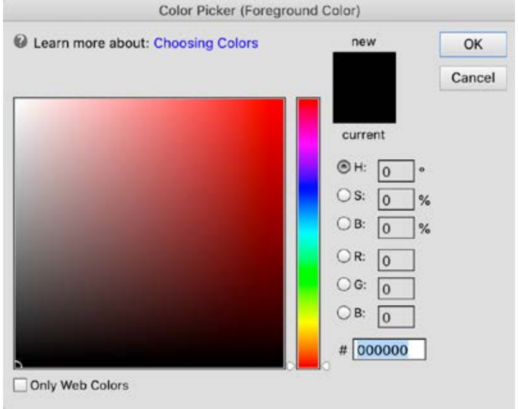
Content Aware Move tool (*Q*):
This is a select, copy, and paste tool. Draw a generous line around the subject (the **Source**) that's to be moved and drag the entire selection to a new location (the **Target**). Using Elements' content-aware AI, it analyzes the **Target** area and blends the copied pixels into the new background. In my experience, this doesn't work as convincingly as a manual copy, paste, and blend adjustment, but if the situation is right (if there are enough pixels in the **Source** area), it does the job beautifully.

Straighten tool:
This tool is used to level all of those photographs that have uneven horizons. Click, hold the mouse, and drag the ensuing *line* across the real horizon in the shot, and when you release the mouse button, the image rotates to make the line you drew 100% on the level. Amazingly, this also works for vertical lines.

COLOR Picker

Color Picker:
This feature, located at the base of the **Tool** bar, allows you to change the color of the **Foreground** and **Background** color palettes. Pressing *D* on the keyboard resets the **Color Picker** to its default black foreground/white background state. Pressing the *X* key swaps black with white, foreground and background.

Use this feature to select a color whenever using any of Photoshop Elements' brush tools, pencils, drawing tools, **Paint Bucket**, and anything else that requires coloring in. Note that, instead of clicking the small color square at the base of the **Tool bar** and then choosing a color from the **Color Picker** panel (as in the following screenshot), you can move the cursor off of the panel and over the image to choose a tint from the image.


Color Picker (Foreground Color)
Learn more about: Choosing Colors
new
current
OK
Cancel
Only Web Colors

● H: 0 °
○ S: 0 %
○ B: 0 %
○ R: 0
○ G: 0
○ B: 0
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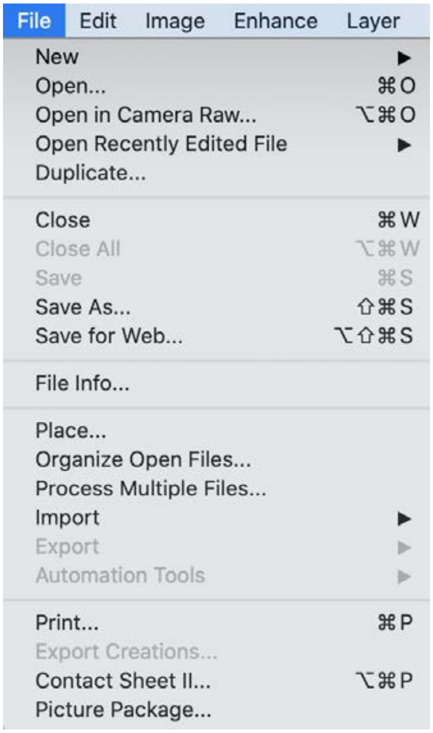
☐ Only Web Colors

Drop-down menus

(Quick and Expert Edit modes only)

File menu


File
Edit
Image
Enhance
Layer
New ▶
Open... ⌘O
Open in Camera Raw... ⌥⌘O
Open Recently Edited File ▶
Duplicate...
Close ⌘W
Close All ⌥⌘W
Save ⌘S
Save As... ⇧⌘S
Save for Web... ⌥⇧⌘S
File Info...
Place...
Organize Open Files...
Process Multiple Files...
Import ▶
Export ▶
Automation Tools ▶
Print... ⌘P
Export Creations...
Contact Sheet II... ⌥⌘P
Picture Package...

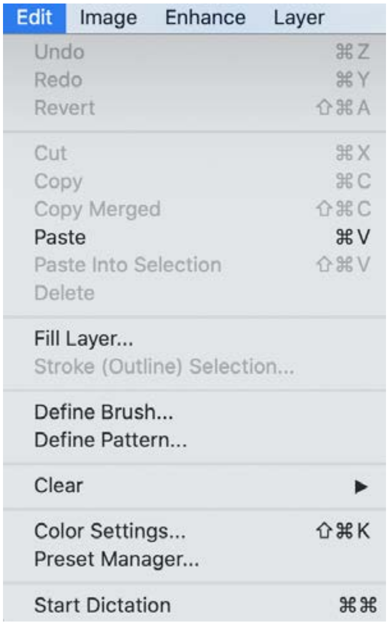
Use this important menu to do the following:

- **File>New** - Create a new, blank document, and a new image from the clipboard.
- **File>Open** - Open a file from a hard drive (*Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *O*).
- **File>Open in Camera RAW** - Force-open **non-RAW** files in the **Camera RAW** utility.
- **File>Open Recently Edited File** - Locate the last 10 or 20 recently edited files without having to navigate through the usual file structure**.**
- **File>Duplicate** - Copy the currently open image and rename it, if needed.
- **File>Close** and **File>Close All** - To close single pictures (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *W)*, or groups of pictures (*Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *W*), with one action.
- **File>Save** - To **Save** your progress (important—*Ctrl/Cmd* + *S*).
- **File>Save As** - To save your progress and to rename/relocate the file (**File>Save As**, or *Ctrl/Cmd* + *Shift* + *S*).
- **File>Save for Web** - To save a file and specifically optimize it for best/fastest display on the web (*Alt/Opt* + *Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *S*).
- **File Info** - To access file information - metadata, GPS, audio information, IPTC, and camera data.
- **Place** - Place images as layers inside other images (especially useful when working with **Smart Objects**).
- **File>Organize Open Files** - To organize already opened files.
- **File>Process Multiple Files** - To batch process files in bulk - a great productivity feature. Change the size, name, and file format and add copyright information - automatically.
- **File>Import** - bring data in from other devices such as a scanner.
- **File>Export** - (usually grayed out unless Elements is working with a third-party plugin.)
- **File>Automation Tools** - (usually grayed out unless Elements is working with a third-party plugin).
- **File>Print** - Provides access to the Elements **Print** panel and, eventually, the printer software.
- **File>Export Creations** - Grayed out unless used for exporting Elements .PSE or project files, such as a photobook.

- **File>Contact Sheet II** and **Picture Package** - used to create and print multiple images in specific page layouts.

Edit menu

This is an important menu because it gives you multiple undo/redo commands. In fact, Photoshop Elements allows you to go backward as much as required. Also, try using the *Ctrl/Cmd* + *Z* (undo) and *Ctrl/Cmd* + *Y* (redo) keyboard shortcuts.



Also use this menu to copy and paste data into an image or to do any of the following:

- **Edit>Revert** - Return the file to its pre-edited state (*Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *A*).
- **Edit>Copy** - Copies the content of a selection (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *C*).
- **Edit>Copy Merged** - this copies the contents of a selection plus any layers in the document by merging them, then copying the result (*Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *C*).
- **Edit>Cut** - deletes the content of a selection (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *X*) - although it can be pasted back into the same document, or a different document, if needed - but only before further saving.
- **Edit>Paste** - Pastes the (copied) content of a selection (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *V*).
- **Edit>Paste into Selection** - Pastes the copied content of any image into a pre-made selection.
- **Edit>Delete** - completely deletes the content of a selection.
- **Edit>Fill Selection** - Uses clever **Content-Aware** technology to retouch the area of a selection. Can also be set to fill with a pattern or flat color.
- **Edit>Stroke Selection** - this command allows you to turn a non-printable selection line into a visible, printable line. This could be a fine keyline around a picture, or even a freehand selection line. Options here include the **Color Picker**, and the choice to add the **Stroke** inside, outside, or in the middle of the selection line. Can be set to any pixel width.
- **Edit>Define Brush from Selection** - Use this to copy a selected part of any image to convert it into a brush tip saved in the brushes library.
- **Edit>Define Pattern from Selection** - The same as above except the selected area is defined as a pattern rather than a brush tip.
- **Edit>Clear>Clear History, Clipboard Content, or All** - Use this to clear the content saved as the **History**, or data stored in the clipboard, or both (good to use if your computer has limited RAM or a full hard drive and it begins to play up or go slow).
- **Edit>Color Settings** - To adjust the (global) **color settings** (*Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *K*).

- **Edit>Preset Manager** - Where your brush presets are stored, renamed, and generally "managed."
- **Edit>Start Dictation** - Used in conjunction with speech recognition software.

Image menu

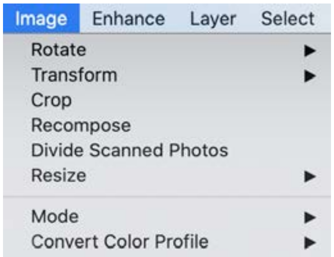
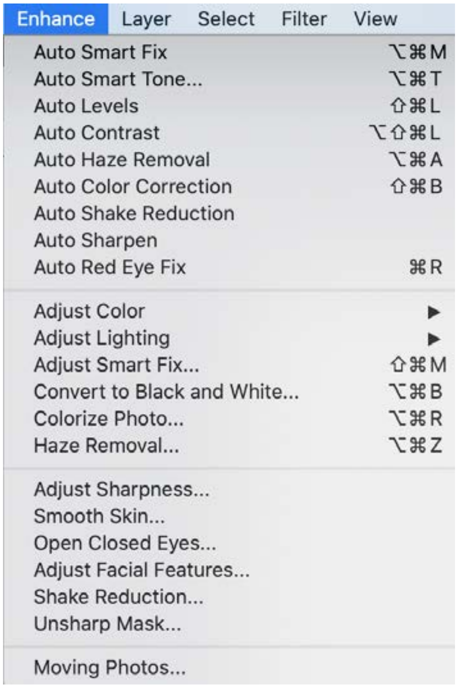


Image
Enhance
Layer
Select
Rotate ▶
Transform ▶
Crop
Recompose
Divide Scanned Photos
Resize ▶
Mode ▶
Convert Color Profile ▶

In this menu, you'll find all of the functions that apply directly to the image.

- **Image>Rotate** - An extensive menu used to manipulate the orientation of the file: **Rotate 90 deg left/right**, **180 deg**, **Custom**, **Flip Horizontally**, and **Flip Vertically**. Also use to rotate individual layers - **90 degrees left/right**, **180 deg**, **free rotate plus Flip Layer Horizontally/Vertically**. It also has two other commands: **Straighten and Crop Image**, plus **Straighten**. I find both functions alarmingly inaccurate - but it really depends on how the subject in the frame is aligned.
- **Image>Transform** - A superbly important part of image editing. *Ctrl/Cmd + T* allows you to change the size, proportion, or perspective of any object on a layer—this is a valuable function that you'll use a lot.
- **Image>Crop** - If you make a selection, then choose this item; it crops everything not selected off the file.
- **Image>Recompose** - This is a menu shortcut to the **Recompose** tool (*W*) found under the **Modify** section of the Tool Bar.
- **Image>Divide Scanned Photos** - this is very similar to scanner software in that it permits you to scan multiple pictures in one (scanner) pass, then use this menu command to split that single scan file into multiple files - one for each print scanned.
- **Image>Resize** - Use **Image Size** to change the number of pixels in a file (*Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + I*), and use **Canvas Size** (*Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + C*) to add pixels to the image **canvas** (the border around the image).
- **Image>Mode** - Use this to set/change the image mode (that is, **Grayscale**, **RGB**, **Indexed color**, and **Bitmap**).
- **Image>Convert Color Profile** - Used to change the color image data from one setting to another (advanced).

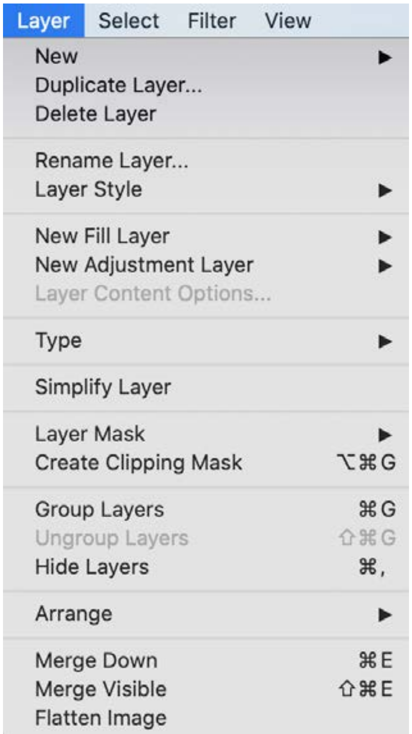
Enhance menu


Enhance
Layer
Select
Filter
View
Auto Smart Fix ⌥⌘M
Auto Smart Tone... ⌥⌘T
Auto Levels ⇧⌘L
Auto Contrast ⌥⇧⌘L
Auto Haze Removal ⌥⌘A
Auto Color Correction ⇧⌘B
Auto Shake Reduction
Auto Sharpen
Auto Red Eye Fix ⌘R
Adjust Color ▶
Adjust Lighting ▶
Adjust Smart Fix... ⇧⌘M
Convert to Black and White... ⌥⌘B
Colorize Photo... ⌥⌘R
Haze Removal... ⌥⌘Z
Adjust Sharpness...
Smooth Skin...
Open Closed Eyes...
Adjust Facial Features...
Shake Reduction...
Unsharp Mask...
Moving Photos...

In this powerhouse menu, you'll find all of the features and tools you need to improve the tones and clarity of your creations:

- **Auto Smart Fix** (*Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *M*).
- **Auto Smart Tone** (*Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *T*).
- **Auto Levels** (*Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *L*).
- **Auto Contrast** (*Alt/Opt* + *Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *L*).
- **Auto Haze Removal** (*Alt/Opt* +*Ctrl/Cmd* + *A*).
- **Auto Color Correction** (*Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *B*).
- **Auto Shake Reduction**
- **Auto Sharpen**
- **Auto Red Eye Fix** (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *R*).
- **Adjust Color** - Includes: **Remove Color Cast, Hue/Saturation** (very useful – *Ctrl/Cmd* + *U*), **Remove Color** (*Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *U*), **Replace Color**, **Adjust Color Curves**, **Adjust Color** for **Skin Tone** and **Defringe Layer**.
- **Adjust Lighting** - Includes: **Shadow Highlight**, **Brightness** and **Contrast**, and the useful **Levels** (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *L*).
- **Adjust Smart Fix** (*Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *M*).
- **Convert to Black and White** (*Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *B*).
- **Colorize Photo** - Uses Adobe AI to select and colorize parts of a black and white or color image. Excellent new feature with an auto and a manual override feature.
- **Haze Removal** (*Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *Z*).
- **Adjust Sharpness**
- **Smooth Skin** - Uses Adobe AI to isolate the facial features before adding a soft smoothness. This is mostly hands-free, producing a satisfying result in portraits.
- **Open Closed Eyes** - Both this and the next feature rely on automated facial recognition (Adobe AI). Fun to use and both produce effective results.
- **Adjust Facial Features** - Manipulate a face as if the pixels were melted plastic. An awesome, capable, and fun tool.
- **Shake Reduction** - The feature used to add contrast and the appearance of sharpness back into a shaky file. Works OK.
- **Unsharp Mask**
- **Moving Photos -** A new feature that takes a single image, automatically selects the subject, then animates either the background or the subject in a number of different ways - the resulting animation is then saved as a GIF.

Layer menu


Layer
Select
Filter
View
New ▶
Duplicate Layer...
Delete Layer
Rename Layer...
Layer Style ▶
New Fill Layer ▶
New Adjustment Layer ▶
Layer Content Options...
Type ▶
Simplify Layer
Layer Mask ▶
Create Clipping Mask ⌥⌘G
Group Layers ⌘G
Ungroup Layers ⇧⌘G
Hide Layers ⌘,
Arrange ▶
Merge Down ⌘E
Merge Visible ⇧⌘E
Flatten Image

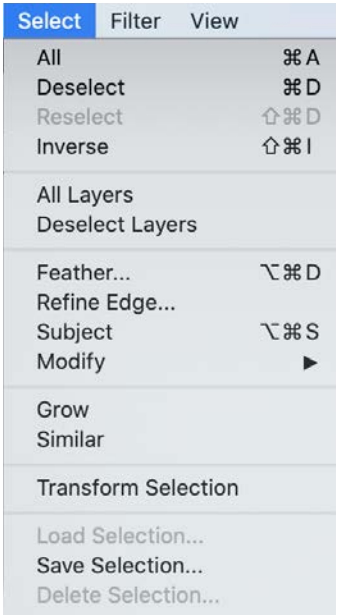
Not surprisingly, everything pertaining to the use and the modification of **Layers** is found under this menu:

- **Layer>New>Layer** - This simply adds a new (blank) layer to the **Layer** panel (*Shift* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *N*).
- **Layer>New>Layer from Background** - converts the background layer into a regular layer.
- **Layer>New>Group** - Creates a new (empty) **group** - this is a method to tidy up a busy layer panel by placing common layers together into a folder (as a group).
- **Layer>New>Group from Layers** - collects all selected layers automatically into one group.
- **Layer>New>Layer via Copy** - this takes the content of a selection and converts it into a new layer (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *J*).
- **Layer>New>Layer via Cut** - The same as the previous command but by removing the cut layer rather than copying it (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *Shift* + *J*).
- **Layer>Duplicate** - Copy (duplicate) an existing (selected) layer.
- **Layer>Delete** - Delete a selected layer.
- **Layer>Rename Layer** - Give the layer a specific name (important if you have a lot of layers in the document, or if the content on that layer is very small).
- **Layer>Layer Style** - A style is a feature such as a drop shadow, bevel, stroke, or emboss effect. These can be applied via this menu or by clicking the **Styles** panel. Use this command also to modify layer styles. Style "recipes" appear attached to the layer in the **Layer** panel - where they can also be modified.
- **Layer>New Fill Layer** - A **Fill Layer** can be a flat color, a gradient, or a pattern.
- **Layer>New Adjustment Layer** - Adjustment layers are non-destructive edits that can be customized through their attached layer mask. Adjustments include: **Levels**, **Brightness/Contrast**, **Hue/Saturation**, **Gradient Map**, **Photo Filter**, **Invert**, **Threshold**, and **Posterize**.
- **Layer>Type** - this general menu command allows access to the **Type** layer - you can change an existing **Type** layer from horizontal text to vertical, manage the fonts, and access the cool **Warp Text** feature, which allows you to bend and distort lines of text. Ideal for making non-linear logos and other creative text designs.
- **Layer>Simplify Layer** - this command converts the content of a layer - which might be a smart filter or vector text – into regular pixels. Also available by right-clicking the appropriate layer in the **Layer** panel.
- **Layer>Layer Mask** - this feature allows you to work with a layer mask. The same features are available by right-clicking the layer in question (advanced).
- **Layer>Create Clipping Mask** - Hides areas of the active layer, based on the transparent pixels of the layer below. (*Alt/Opt* + *Ctrl/Cmd* + *G*—advanced.)
- **Layer>Release Clipping Mask** - removes the effect of the clipping mask without deleting it.
- **Layer>Make a Layer Group** (advanced).
- **Layer>Hide Layers** - a handy shortcut to temporarily hide a layer - *Ctrl/Cmd* + *,*.
- **Layer>Arrange** - a command to re-arrange the layer order. I think it's far easier to drag the layer to a new position in the **Layer** panel itself.
- **Layer>Merge Down** - Use the keyboard shortcut (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *E*) to merge the selected layer with the layer beneath it.

- **Layer>Merge Visible** - this works like the previous command except that all visible layers are merged (*Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + E*).
- **Layer>Flatten Image** - Flattening an image discards all hidden layers, and fills transparent areas with white. You don't need to flatten a file until all editing has finished. Flattening a multi-layered file reduces its file size.

Select menu

As its name suggests, this menu contains everything to do with **Selections**. Use its features to do the following:

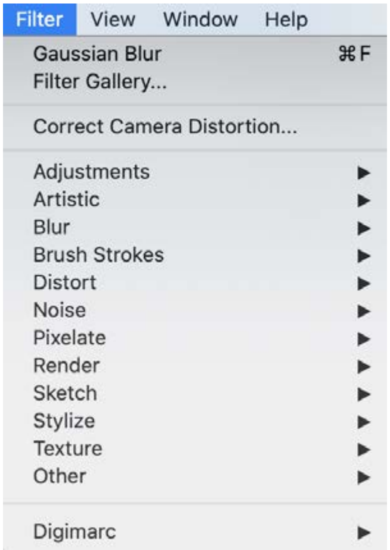


- **Select>Select All** – A very handy command - select an entire image or the content of a selection - prior to you pasting it somewhere (*Ctrl/Cmd + A*).
- **Select>Deselect** - this effectively kills off the current selection (that is, turns it off - *Ctrl/Cmd + D*).
- **Select>Reselect** - used to bring the previous selection back into the image (*Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + D*).
- **Select>Inverse** - use this to flip your selection into a negative state. An excellent technique if your subject is hard to select but the background is not (*Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + I*).
- **Select>Feather** - this is an integral part of the selection process - to **Feather** the edge means the sharp selection line is made softer.
- **Select>Refine Edge** - no selection is ever 100% perfect, so use this mini-utility to modify that selection edge.
- **Select>Subject** (*Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + S*) – An impressive new feature using AI to find and select the subject of the image. If the subject is clear, it works well.
- **Select>Modify** – Opens up a range of very useful selection modification features such as **Border**, **Smooth**, **Expand**, and **Contract**. Vital tools for perfecting the accuracy of a selection.
- **Select>Grow** – As a selection modifier (makes the selection larger by a set pixel amount).
- **Select>Similar** – A selection modifier that selects pixels of a similar tonal range to those of the current selection.
- **Select>Transform Selection** – A handy tool for adjusting the size and shape of an existing selection.
- **Select>Load Selection** – Allows you to import (or load) an already-saved selection.
- **Select>Save Selection** - this is an important command - it allows you to preserve your selected work (in the TIFF or PSD file format only).

- **Select>Delete Selection** - this is a selection modifier allowing you to take the previously saved selection out of the file. Used particularly if you have a lot of updated or modified selections in the file. Delete the ones that are no longer in date or relevant.

Filter menu

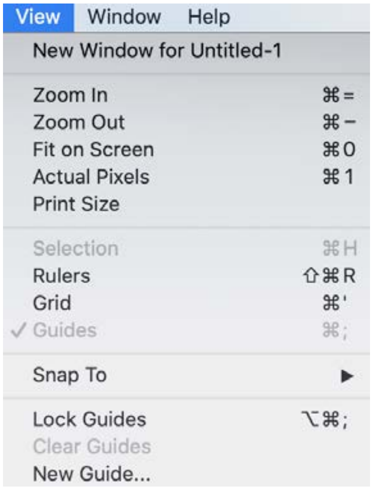
There are too many filter tools to mention here. Under the **Filter** menu, you'll find a huge range of filter **special effects**, some of which are designed to lend an artistic look to your work. I use filters for jobs such as blurring pixels (depth of field effects) and some for distorting, sketching, stylizing, adding texture, and even for adding more digital noise. All filter effects can be used globally or simply applied to a smaller part of the image once they're confined inside a **selection**.


Filter
View
Window
Help
Gaussian Blur ⌘F
Filter Gallery...
Correct Camera Distortion...
Adjustments ▶
Artistic ▶
Blur ▶
Brush Strokes ▶
Distort ▶
Noise ▶
Pixelate ▶
Render ▶
Sketch ▶
Stylize ▶
Texture ▶
Other ▶
Digimarc ▶

Correct Camera Distortion - Separate from the rest of the filters, **Correct Camera Distortion** is designed for correcting lens distortion. Use this to add or subtract optical errors, as well as creating a vignette and adjusting perspective.

View menu

The tools that are found inside the **View** menu are used principally to line up, arrange, enlarge, or reduce the image size that you're currently viewing. Note that none of these overlay *helpers*, such as **Grid**, **Rulers**, or **Guides**, will show once the images are printed or uploaded to the internet. They are merely there in order to assist your page layout and design:


View
Window
Help
New Window for Untitled-1
Zoom In ⌘=
Zoom Out ⌘−
Fit on Screen ⌘0
Actual Pixels ⌘1
Print Size
Selection ⌘H
Rulers ⇧⌘R
Grid ⌘'
✓ Guides ⌘;
Snap To ▶
Lock Guides ⌥⌘;
Clear Guides
New Guide...

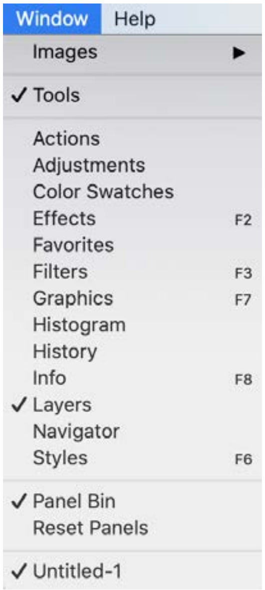
- **View>Zoom In** - A handy command to enlargen the image on the main screen. Learn the keyboard shortcuts for this as they will streamline your workload immeasurably (*Ctrl/Cmd* + =).
- **View>Zoom Out** - The opposite to the previous action (*Ctrl/Cmd* + -).
- **View>Fit on Screen** - another excellent shortcut to learn - (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *0*).
- **View>Actual Pixels** - Enlargens the image to pixel level (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *1*).
- **View>Print Size**
- **View>Selection** - Hides the selection line temporarily (*Ctrl/Cmd* + *H*—a handy shortcut to learn and use when you're working with selections, but don't forget to turn it back on again - *Ctrl/Cmd* + *H*).

- **View>Rulers** - another essential tool for any document designer (*Shift + Ctrl/Cmd + R*).
- **View>Grid** - set the grid parameters (size, color, and frequency) through the application preferences (*Ctrl/Cmd + '*).
- **View>Guides** - a great helper for lining objects up. To find a guide, turn the **Ruler** on and drag the mouse out of the ruler margin into the image. Drag back into the ruler to get rid of them (*Ctrl/Cmd + ;*).
- **View>Snap To** – (Makes the grid and guides sticky or *magnetic*, making it easier to align multiple objects quickly and accurately.)
- **View>Lock Guides** - handy if, having spent time arranging a layout, you want to prevent accidental shifting of the guides (*Alt/Opt + Ctrl/Cmd + ;*).
- **View>Clear Guides** - simple - removes all guides.
- **View>New Guide** - places a new guide in the image - it's far, far easier to drag a new guide off the ruler.

Window menu

In this drop-down menu, you'll find references to all of the panels inside Photoshop Elements. These include the following:

- **Window>Actions** – An Action is a pre-recorded editing process that can be played back on single or multiple files. Actions are recorded in Photoshop CC so not all Actions copied (from online resources) will work in Elements.
- **Window>Adjustments** – Useful and easy **Quick Edit** special effects and tonal fixes.



- **Window>Color Swatches** – Useful for setting, saving, and reusing text and painting colors.
- **Window>Effects** – Excellent bunch of preset effects—inspirational (*F2*).
- **Window>Favorites** – Drag often-used features here so that they can be found and used again quickly without having to hunt through all the menus.
- **Window>Filters** – Too many to mention here—hundreds of filters and creative possibilities (*F3*).
- **Window>Graphics** – Access to Elements' hundreds of downloadable graphics (*F7*).
- **Window>Histogram** – The histogram refers to the tonal distribution throughout the image.
- **Window>History** – Calls up all the actions performed since the last save. Click on a previous state to 'go back in time' in relation to the edits applied to that file.

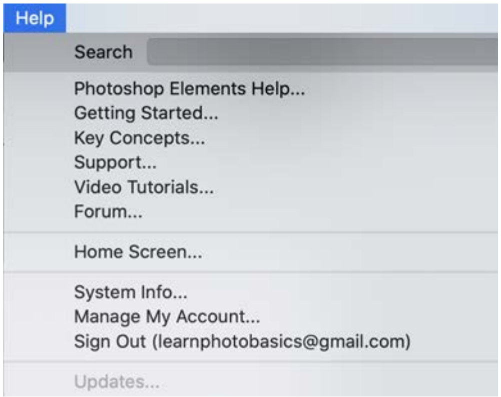
- **Window>Info**: Used to measure pixel brightness (among other metrics), irrespective of screen calibration. An excellent little helper (*F8*).
- **Window>Layers:** An important panel for all multi-image and text-based image projects.
- **Window>Navigator**: When working on a highly zoomed-in image, use **Navigator** to keep an eye on exactly where it is in the image that you are looking/working.
- **Window>Styles** - provides access to the **Styles** or press (*F6*) or go to the panel directly, at the bottom right-hand side of the screen.
- **Window>Panel Bin:** All open images are visible in this pop-up bin area.
- **Window>Reset Panels** – (Use this if your desktop is awash with panels and you need a fresh start.)

(If the name of the panel has a checkmark next to it, it's open somewhere on the desktop. If there is no checkmark, it's closed.)

Help menu

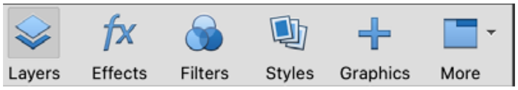
The **Help** menu provides a shortcut to the online Adobe help manuals, as well as subjects such as the following:

- Tips for getting started
- Key concepts
- Support
- Video tutorials online
- Adobe forums
- Updates
- A direct link to your account settings
- Panels overview


Help
Search
Photoshop Elements Help...
Getting Started...
Key Concepts...
Support...
Video Tutorials...
Forum...
Home Screen...
System Info...
Manage My Account...
Sign Out (learnphotobasics@gmail.com)
Updates...

The Panels (Quick and Expert Edit Modes)

Layers panel


Layers
Effects
Filters
Styles
Graphics
More

This is possibly the most important Panel in this program, especially if you're working with multi-image files or images with text (because different image elements can be placed onto separate layers). In some of the more complex operations offered by Photoshop Elements, this panel is hidden unless you specifically search out its advanced mode. (It's hidden because, since that process might involve a very complex list of functions, having everything visible might be a recipe for disaster. Deleting, moving, or renaming any one of those layers might prevent the (prerecorded) action from being completed.)

Effects panel

As its name might suggest, this panel is all about choosing a special effect to apply either to a pixel-based **image** or to a vector-based **text layer**. From the drop-down menu inside this panel, you can choose to view everything (**Show all**) or choose one of the sub-headers, which include **Faded Photo**, **Glow**, **Monotone Color**, **Painting**, **Panels**, **Seasons**, **Textures**, and **Vintage.**

Filters panel

Like the **Effects** panel, this panel offers a wide range of special effects that can be applied in a range of ways to your image files. Also like the **Effects** panel, these filter effects, of which there are more than 300, are subdivided by a drop-down menu inside the main panel. Subheadings include **Artistic**, **Blur**, **Brushstrokes**, **Distort**, **Noise**, **Pixelated**, **Render**, **Sketch**, **Styles**, and **Other**. Another way to access these filters is to use the excellent **Filter Gallery**, which is located under the **Filter** drop-down menu at the top of the screen.

Styles panel

Like the previous two panels, **Styles** incorporates a number of special effects, most of which are legacy items from the early days of Photoshop Elements. This is the panel where you'll find **Drop Shadows**, **Bevels**, **Image Effects**, and **Photographic Effects**. Other subheadings include **Complex**, **Glass Buttons**, **Inner Glows**, **Inner Shadows**, **Outer Glows**, **Patterns**, **Strokes**, **Visibility**, **Wow Chrome**, **Wow Neon**, and **Wow Plastic**. Some of these can be applied directly to images while others work especially well on text layers. They can also be used to create graphic effects if you're designing web pages or creating vector art.

Graphics panel

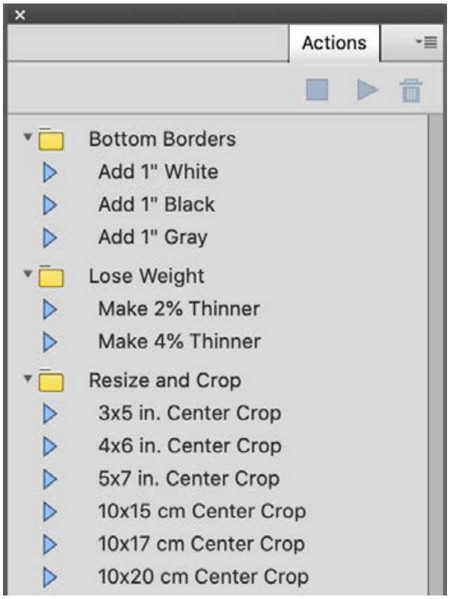
This panel perhaps has more than all of the other panels put together (with more than 1,500 downloadable assets). To give you an idea, you can use the **By Type** drop-down menu at the top of the panel to display the numerous options a little more clearly. **By Type** includes **Activity**, **Color**, **Event**, **Mood**, **Object**, **Seasons**, **Style**, and **By Word**.

The right-hand drop-down menu features headers that read: **Backgrounds**, **Friends**, **Graphics**, **Shapes**, and **Text**. Note that these need to be **downloaded first** before you can incorporate them into a project. They are vector clip art files, so they are very small and are ready for use almost immediately.

Actions panel

An **Action** is a pre-recorded set of instructions for a specific editing process, such as a resolution change, brightness adjustment, or file format change.

Actions are created (recorded) using Adobe **Photoshop CC** and can be replayed on a single image, or in bulk. Since many **Actions** are recorded using functions that are not present in Photoshop Elements, you'll find that, if you download and import new **Actions** (from the internet), it's more than likely they'll not function correctly. Adobe has included the same pre-recorded **Actions** as a *starter pack* in Elements for years—which would suggest to me that they are no longer worth pursuing—because most of the Photoshop CC-recorded actions will not work in Elements. Some actions are designed to reveal features in Elements that are normally hidden, such as the **Curves** tool.



Color swatches

Adobe supplies Elements with a range of **color swatches**, which can be treated like a student paint box. Each swatch has a range of different colors. You can choose from **Photo Filter Colors**, **Web Hues**, **Web-Safe Colors**, **Web Spectrum**, **Windows**, or **Mac OS**. Alternatively, you can create and save your own **custom swatches** for specific jobs.

More tabs

Histogram panel

The **Histogram**, that curious *mountain range* depicting where in the image the tones sit in relation to absolute black and absolute white, is a very handy tool. At a glance, you can tell whether an image is overexposed or underexposed.

History panel

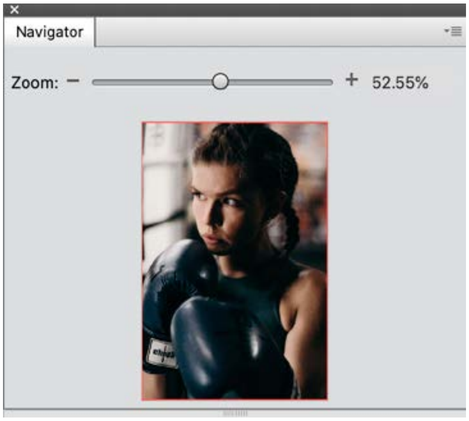
History contains a list of all the steps and mouse clicks that are made while editing an image. Everything is recorded in a linear fashion, so it's entirely possible to go back in time to a previous edit state in order to re-work a specific part of the edit process. It doesn't allow you to combine different states—once a state has been deleted, everything later than that is also lost.

Favorites panel

Store frequently used clip art, filters, effects, and text, by dragging the effect thumbnail into this panel. This is a huge time-saver because everything is in one place for fast access.

Navigator panel

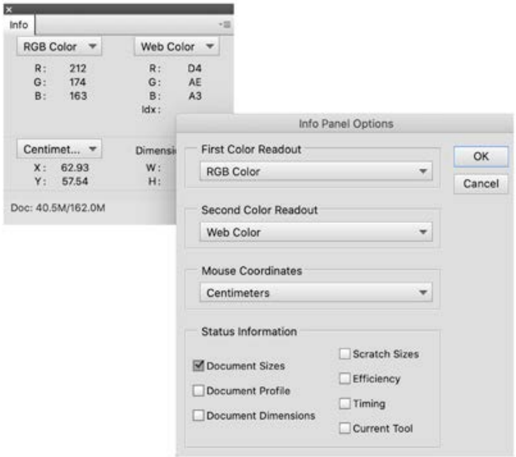
This small panel displays a large thumbnail of the image that's displayed in the main screen. If this is enlarged beyond the bounds of the screen, it clearly displays the proportion of the enlarged image that's currently visible as a bright red rectangle. Click in this shape to shift your view of the enlarged image. This is useful when you're editing highly enlarged images because it allows you to navigate around the image far faster than if using the regular scroll bars.



Zoom: 52.55%

Info panel

Use this panel to measure the brightness or darkness of any part of the image that's displayed on the main screen. It doesn't matter what tool you happen to be using at the time—mouse over the area of concern and the **Info** panel will give you an RGB (brightness) readout.



RGB Color
R: 212
G: 174
B: 163

Web Color
R: D4
G: AE
B: A3
Idx:

Centimet...
X: 62.93
Y: 57.54

Dimensi
W:
H:

Doc: 40.5M/162.0M

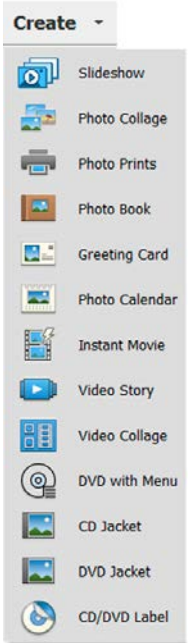
First Color Readout: RGB Color
Second Color Readout: Web Color
Mouse Coordinates: Centimeters

Status Information
☑ Document Sizes
☐ Document Profile
☐ Document Dimensions
☐ Scratch Sizes
☐ Efficiency
☐ Timing
☐ Current Tool

If you have just edited the picture and then read the **Info** panel, it cleverly displays both the before and after RGB readout values together. This is a very useful tool, especially for all of those photographers whose monitor is not 100% calibrated. As seen here, this little panel (plus the opened, larger **Options** panel for **Info**) is chock-full of other display information if and when needed, including: **Scratch Size**, **Document size**, **Efficiency**, and **current tool**.

Create Menu

(Organizer and Editor)



Slideshow

This is one of the easiest ways to create a slideshow (.MP4 movie format) and probably the fastest. Because it's so quick, you get very little input and a few style choices and that's it. Previous versions of Elements enjoyed quite a sophisticated and feature-rich slide-making utility. This new version has been dumbed-down—it's fast and easy, but if you want greater control, you'll have to turn to a third-party application.

Photo Collage

This is an amazing feature that takes a bunch of images and assembles them into a nicely designed collage. To achieve this the traditional way, that is, using layers and masks, would take a long time. This feature takes a few seconds. Brilliant.

Photo Prints

This is a feature that links your Elements output to a local printer. Options include **Local printer** (single prints), **Picture Package** (a set of differently sized pictures all on one sheet of paper), or **Contact Sheet** (multiple images arranged in a grid across the page).

Quote Graphic

A new feature in Elements 2021 - Quote Graphic provides the tools to make a photographic illustration or a purely graphic image incorporating any kind of short text message (hence the name) using a range of clip art graphics and animations so the file is exported as a GIF file for social media or video usage.

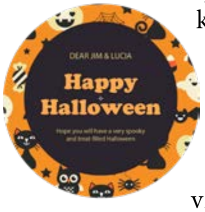


Photo Book

This feature allows you to add multiple images into a preset page layout—you choose the number of pages and the design, which is then downloaded from the Adobe servers. Populating the pages is as simple as drag and drop.

Greeting Card

A rather dated-looking set of preset card designs mark this feature as one that hasn't been upgraded for many years. That being said, it is easy to use and produces reasonably good results. With a little experience, anyone could produce a far better, more personal design by doing it manually.

Photo Calendar

This feature runs in a similar fashion to the Greeting Card utility—choose a style and design, download it from the Adobe servers, and drag and drop your images from the

Photo Bin into the monthly pages. To finish, print this on a local printer and get it bound at the local office services outlet. Many other companies, most notably digital photo making businesses, produce far superior products.

Instant Movie

This is only applicable if you also own Adobe Premiere Elements (video). I thought this was one more of those *big claims with mediocre results* type products. How wrong I was—if you shoot video but don't know how to edit your clips—or don't have the time—this feature is truly amazing. Add the clips and let it make an instant video. It works well.

Video Story

A slightly more serious and complicated video editing feature (than the Instant Video feature), this was designed, as its name suggests, to tell a story, thereby incorporating text and graphics with your video clips. Again, this is a brilliant, entry-level video widget.

Video Collage

This is another beautifully designed utility that allows you to make a split-screen, multi-clip video with virtually no prior experience of editing clips. A great design that works well.

DVD with Menu, CD Jacket, DVD Jacket, and CD/DVD label

These four projects are somewhat dated—they have been present in Elements for several versions—and I suspect they are no longer used that often.

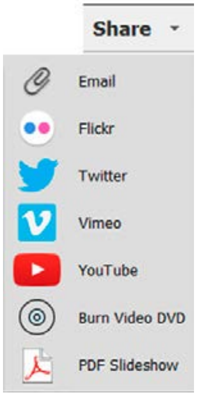
The fad of creating your own DVD labels has long-faded into the downloadable distance. Like many of Elements' project-based features, these processes were very easy to use, with a drag-and-drop design, but with limited designs. I used to make all of my DVD labels and CD jackets—it was great fun but quite labor-intensive.

Share menu

(Organizer and Editor)

Email

Link your email account with this utility to attach images easily and efficiently.



Twitter

Sign up, then upload your images directly to the Twitterscape.

Flickr

Sign up, then load images directly into your Flickr Photostream or be more specific and target a specific Flickr folder.

Vimeo and YouTube

Both of these features are only relevant for video—linking your Vimeo and YouTube accounts to provide a direct link between the two features makes posting so much simpler.

Burn Video DVD

This is like the previous point; this is a simple method for getting your data onto DVD media (requires Premiere Elements to function).

PDF Slideshow

Here, you can add multiple images in the PDF slideshow window. Then, the software binds it all together into a universally readable PDF file that can then be distributed via email, a blog, website, disk, or USB media.

Glossary

Artifact

Optical distortion within an image caused by (too much) image compression. Filters in Elements can be used to minimize the negative aspects of this ugly occurrence.

Bit Depth

The amount of data in a digital file. The higher the bit depth, the more potential you have, especially for editing. Files have to be reduced in bit depth for printing as most printers have limited capabilities.

Bitmap

A method of storing digital information by mapping out an image bit by bit. The density of the pixels determines how sharp the image resolution will be.

CMYK Color (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black

The color space used for commercial offset printing. CMYK is also a common working color space for inkjet, laser, and dye-sublimation printers.

Color Calibration

The process of regulating the color on a computer monitor so that what you see onscreen is an accurate representation of what was captured by the camera.

Color Space

The range of colors that can be reproduced on a computer monitor or in print. The most commonly used color spaces for digital imaging are the baseline RGB and wider-gamut Adobe RGB (1998).

Compression

Used to make image files physically smaller on disk. There are two types of compression: lossless and lossy. TIFF and Photoshop files can be compressed with no loss of quality, while JPEGs, because of their native compression, are lossy.

Depth of field

A measure of how much of an image, apart from the main subject, remains in focus, in the background and the foreground. Depth of field is controlled by the aperture, the focal length of the lens, and the subject distance. A large aperture has a shallow depth of field - a smaller (for example, f22) aperture records a much deeper focus.

Digital Negative

Digital Negative (DNG) is a free RAW image format produced by Adobe. It's regarded as being a 'universal' RAW file.

Dots Per Inch (dpi)

Dots per inch describes the proximity of the pixels to each other. The closer the dots, the more detailed the image. A typical dpi for print is 300 dpi, while online it's considerably less, at 72 dpi. DPI is the same as ppi (pixels per inch) and lpi (lines per inch).

EXIF

An abbreviation of Exchangeable Image File, this is the metadata your camera records in an image file. It provides information about the camera settings. This includes: date, time, camera make and model, resolution, aperture, shutter speed, ISO, GPS (if available), and much more.

Gamma

The brightness curve of the color spectrum as displayed (or reproduced) on a computer monitor, a printer, or scanner.

HDR

HDR or high dynamic range photography is a technique for surpassing the somewhat limited exposure range of cameras. By shooting a scene with several different exposures, then combining them using dedicated software, you can create an image with a far wider tonal range than if it were just the one shot. Photomerge Exposure is one example of this technique (Guided Edit mode).

Histogram

The chart or 'mountain range' you often see on the back of a camera and in the **Levels** tool. The horizontal axis represents the tonal range of an image, expressed in values of 0 to 255: 0 = black, 255 = white. The vertical axis indicates the number of pixels in the image that match that particular tonal range value.

Image Resize

A software feature for changing the pixel dimensions of an image file. Changing the size up or down also changes the resolution of the image. But if it includes a resample - a process where pixels are added or subtracted to the original – the resolution (dots per inch) remains the same.

JPEG

A lossy compression file format that keeps file sizes relatively small and is easily transferred via email and the web. The smaller the file is compressed, the more ugly visual artifacts become noticeable.

Kilobyte

1,024 bytes makes 1 kilobyte, written KB, which refers to the size of an image file. This relates to the amount of image data in the file.

Megabyte

1,024 Kilobytes, written MB, 1,024 kilobytes makes a megabyte, written MB, which is a term that describes file size or media capacity, such as hard drives. The number refers to the amount of information or image data in a file or how much information can be contained on a memory card, CD or DVD, hard drive, or disk.

Megapixel

A standard unit of measurement for DSLR camera resolution. Generally, the more megapixels, the better the image detail.

Noise

The appearance of unwanted color artifacts in digital images. Noise increases with sensitivity, so it is more visible in images taken with higher ISO ratings.

Overexposure

The result of recording too much light, producing a lighter image. It can usually be corrected with software, but if it is dramatic, data might have been fatally lost ('clipped').

Pixelization

The negative breakup of an image file that has been enlarged to a point where there are not enough pixels to create a clear picture. Most software adds a type of diffusion that helps smooth out the lack of pixels, which means the image appears soft rather than just pixelated.

Pixel

Pixels are the tiny dots that make up a digital image. The resolution of digital images is measured in the number of pixels that make up the width and height, for example, 6,000x4,000 (this equals 24 megapixels).

PNG

Portable Network Graphic, a type of image file format used on the World Wide Web. Its most notable feature is the ability to preserve transparency, making it ideal for irregular-shaped objects that have to encompass a preset background color or texture.

PSD file (`.psd`)

This is the Photoshop file format used by Elements and many other applications. Typically used to store both picture information as well as details of any masks, selections, or paths that might be in the file. It's a good general format and is totally lossless.

RAW file

A RAW file is a complete download of what your camera's sensor 'sees' before it is processed in the camera. RAW files take longer to write to the memory card and occupy more storage space. They allow more flexibility and options in postprocessing.

RGB Color (Red, Green, Blue)

RGB is an additive color model in which red, green, and blue light is added together in various ways to reproduce a broad array of colors for representation and display as images on computers and other digital devices.

Saturation

The depth of color tones in an image. Too much is termed 'heavily saturated' while not enough is described as being "muted." No saturation produces a black and white image.

TIFF file (`.tif`)

Another almost universal file type. Like the .psd format, TIFF files can contain additional information such as selections and layers. TIFF files can be compressed by up to 25% losslessly.

Tonal Range

A photographic term used to describe the quality of color and tone ranging from an image's darkest shadow through to the brightest highlight details, including all of the transitions in between.

Vignetting

A technical term for when the barrel of a zoom lens becomes visible on an image - usually in the form of dark corners. Darkening the edges of a photo is also a very effective way to emphasize the central subject in post-production.

White Balance

Digital cameras need a reference point for white in order to render all the colors of the spectrum naturally. This is called the White Balance and it can be calculated automatically in-camera. If it gets it wrong, you can set it manually, choosing from a preset range of 'recipes' such as **Fluorescent**, **Sunlight**, **Cloudy**, **Flash**, and **Indoors**.

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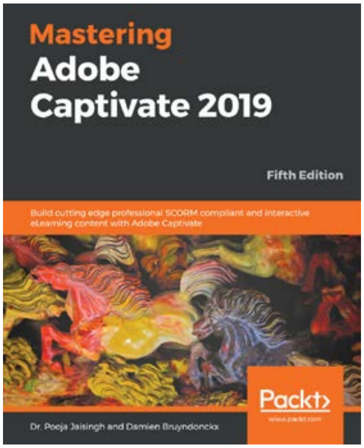
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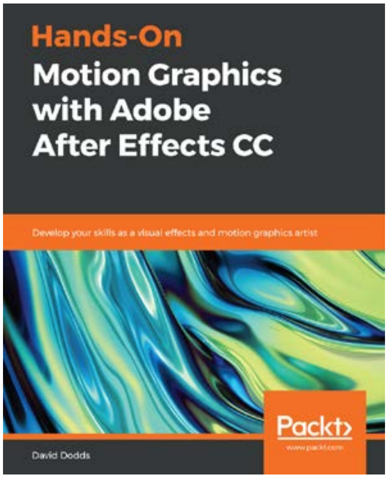
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